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Introduction: The Gothic in Contemporary British Trauma Fiction

As a specialist in trauma theory, it has been interesting to witness the dove-tailing that has occurred in the fields of literary trauma studies and Gothic criticism at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. I first became aware of the merging of these two fields in an undergraduate course in the modern British novel that ended with Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love* and Pat Barker's *Double Vision*. Both had in common the generic classification of "trauma fiction," though only the latter could also be said to partake in the Gothic genre. It was 2010, and as a member of the generation of students who came of age in the post-9/11 era, the novel's palpable anxieties over the act of bearing witness to personal and collective trauma, stoked by a culture of constant news of foreign atrocities, seemed self-evident. And as someone with more than a passing interest in horror, the novel's recurring Gothic motifs—its scorched-earth landscapes charged with threat, dark forests composed of trees with the seeming desire to ensnare and devour passers-by, and men-acing birds keeping a glowing eye on the predatory men and their fetishized female victims below—awakened both my scholarly and fangirl sensibilities: ideal conditions for a future scholarly monograph on the intersections of trauma fiction and the Gothic, but also an indication of the complexity of responses that works of trauma fiction like this one evoke.

Although it wasn't the dissonant mix of empathy for the novel's trau-matized victims and attraction to its Gothic tropes that was of interest, at least not initially. As I questioned whether the intersection between the

representation of trauma and the Gothic conventions present in Barker's novel constituted a trend that could be traced through other British novels of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, I was not immediately aware of the implications these dissonant responses held. The anxious millennial in me wanted to view these Gothic devices as reflections of millennial anxieties, and it was not difficult to find a wealth of criticism supporting the contention that these apprehensions were in many ways analogous to the "anxiety over the change in social and political structure" present at the eighteenth-century *fin de siècle*: anxieties that Jessica Bomarito (2006) argues were caused by "such events as the French Revolution, the rise in secular-based government, and scientific advances and industrial development" (p. 1), and to which the Gothic has largely been seen as a response. The label that Catherine Spooner (2006) ascribes to our current moment, "*fin de millennium*" (p. 21), speaks to this ready association. Similarly, film critic Stella Hockenhull (2010) likens what she terms the "aftermath aesthetic" of recent British horror films to the Gothic sublime, characteristic of a Romantic literary sensibility which she argues emerges "at particular junctures in history, such as periods of conflict and unrest" (p. 223) like the eighteenth century, but also like our contemporary historical moment, citing terrorism, political volatility, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and global climate change as examples of the sort of upheaval contemporary society has witnessed. From this perspective, we could call the Gothic not only a response to latent collective cultural anxieties but also a reaction to the spectatorial nature of a contemporary, media-saturated culture, in which we are simultaneously confronted with images of atrocity on-screen, but numbed, somehow, to the material reality of this violence. These were the sorts of concerns I saw represented—all with varying degrees of "participation" (to borrow a term from Derrida) in the Gothic—in the novels studied here.

This book sets out to understand just why the dovetailing between literary trauma studies and the Gothic is occurring and what it means for both critical fields. Since the 1990s, when Cathy Caruth and other Yale School critics[1] first advanced the concept of a literary trauma theory that blended the Freudian model of traumatic memory with DeManian

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[1] These include, in addition to Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, and Geoffrey Hartman.

deconstruction,[2] the very notion of trauma has morphed from a clinical diagnosis seemingly to a way of being in the world. The result is the emergence of what Kirby Farrell (1998) aptly terms "post-traumatic culture" (p. 18). In his book of the same name, Farrell connects the "post-traumatic imagination" (p. 4) that, he argues, emerged in the wake of Freud's study of nineteenth-century train-wreck victims to its resurgence a century later at the twentieth-century *fin de siècle*. In this atmosphere of millennial apprehension, the concept of trauma expands beyond its clinical definition, becoming "a cultural trope that has met many different needs" (p. 14), ranging from acting as a kind of history that "attempts to square the present with its past" to serving as a means to "reinforce the conviction of a ground of experience and to strengthen group bonding" (p. 22). Farrell does not shy away from the "plasticity" of the concept of trauma as an "enabling fiction, an explanatory tool for managing unquiet minds in an overwhelming world" (p. x) as much as a means of making sense of the undeniably traumatic violence that has taken place over the course of the twentieth century and which has continued into the twenty-first (e.g., the Great Depression, two World Wars, the Cold War, the threat of nuclear annihilation, racial and socioeconomic tensions, and the proliferation of technologies, whose benefits come at the expense of vulnerable populations). But regardless of the degree of validity with which people "feel, or are prepared to feel … as if they have been traumatized" (p. x), the presence of trauma as an interpretive mode that attempts to make sense of Western culture at the turn of the twenty-first century has only grown stronger in the years that have passed since *Post-Traumatic Culture*'s 1998 publication.

The circumstances giving rise to trauma as an interpretive mode appear to be both historical and affective. Farrell sees the emergence of a post-traumatic culture at both the nineteenth-century *fin de siècle* and the turn of the twenty-first century—what Spooner (2006) calls the "*fin de millennium*" (p. 21)—as part of a correlation between the traumatic imagination and periods of "massive historical change" caused by discrete events (e.g., industrialisation and the impact of technology on our understanding of

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[2] Felman and Laub theorize the Holocaust as a crisis of history and of representation that is analogous to the post-structuralist notion, elaborated by Paul De Man and others, of the slippage between language (sign) and that to which it refers (referent). Caruth (1996) later applies this loss of referentiality (in combination with Freudian models of memory) to the relationship between trauma and victim and, by extension, testimony and listener, leading her to envision trauma as a perpetually "unclaimed" experience (p. 10).

time and movement through space), and also by a more vaguely defined mood brought about simply by living in "a world in which power and authority seem staggeringly out of balance, in which personal responsibility and helplessness seem crushing, and in which cultural meanings no longer seem to transcend death" (Farrell 1998: 14). In the context of the novels discussed in the following chapters, post-traumatic culture is partly a product of millennial anxiety brought about by discrete events: each text engages in a backward glance in order to take stock of the violence of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, including conflicts like the Holocaust, World Wars I and II, the Cold War, the Cambodian genocide, the 1991–2001 Yugoslav Wars, and 9/11, as well as the potentially exploitative effects of scientific advancements such as cloning. However, post-traumatic culture in these novels is also linked to affects (terror, rage, guilt, helplessness, apathy, and numbness) resulting from the contemporary Western subject's highly mediated—or spectatorial—relationship to these events.

A timely companion to the emergence of post-traumatic culture at the close of the twentieth century is the recent uptick in creative and scholarly interest in the Gothic[3]: Angela Carter's assertion that we are living in "Gothic times" (p. 122) comes in the afterword to her collection of short stories titled *Fireworks*, written in 1974, seemingly as a diagnosis of encroaching twentieth-century *fin-de-siècle* anxiety. Carter's use of the Gothic as a descriptor for the collective apprehension she identifies reflects a shift in criticism: where the Gothic was once seen as a distinct "outlaw" genre standing in opposition to realism, it is now generally viewed as an aesthetic or tone encompassing a broad range of cultural productions far beyond literature and expanding into the realms of television, film, fashion, and beyond. For example, Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Maria Beville (2014) assert that "The Gothic has never been more alive than it is today," and that "it has travelled across cultural and media landscapes to permeate even the most banal aspects of everyday living," so that it has become something of a "cultural *milieu*" (p. 1). Beville (2014) argues that the Gothic is more than a genre, and has become "a way of simply seeing the world around us in its present, its pasts, and its futures" (p. 67). The way

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[3] Steven Bruhm (2002) notes the "enormous popularity of the Gothic … since the Second World War," attributing this surge in popularity partially to the ways in which the genre "play[s] with chronology, looking back to moments in an imaginary history, pining for a social stability that never existed" (p. 259).

the Gothic has seemingly emerged out of the margins of literature to become a way of being in the world mirrors a similar emergence of trauma out of the clinic and into the surrounding culture. This critical interest both in the Gothic and in trauma in contemporary culture reflects the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the Gothic and trauma fiction, a genre given that identifying label as part of the development in the 1990s of the new field of literary trauma theory. This book examines the presence of contemporary Gothic elements in recent British trauma fiction as symptomatic of post-traumatic culture at the twentieth-century *fin de siècle*: that is, as a response to the societal violence of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as well as an expression of the related crisis of representation brought about by the contemporary witness's highly mediated and spectatorial relationship to this violence.

CURRENT DEBATES IN TRAUMA THEORY AND WITNESSING

Trauma Theory and the Ethics of Criticism

Understanding the emergence of trauma fiction requires examining the theoretical environment from which the generic classification emerged. Literary criticism in the 1990s, in reaction to what was seen as the extreme moral relativism of post-structuralist theory, took an "ethical turn" (Luckhurst 2006, p. 503), searching for social value in the act of literary analysis. As a result of this effort, theorists began focusing on what they considered, in effect, an emergent genre, trauma fiction. Cathy Caruth and other trauma theorists of the Yale School posited a fundamental link between psychoanalysis (specifically Freud's theory of the inaccessibility of traumatic memory) and literature, arguing that both are concerned with "the complex relation between knowing and not knowing" and thus opening the door to a theory of literary trauma (Caruth 1996, p. 3). Freudian models of memory argue that an event is traumatic when its initial occurrence breaks the frame of reference of its victim and so is not fully registered at the time of its occurrence, but is only consciously registered much later (often when the victim's memory is triggered by a secondary event). In *Studies in Hysteria*, Freud and Breuer describe the way in which the initial trauma, by the time it is narrated by the analysand, may be obscured by layers of memory that are "concentrically stratified around the pathogenic nucleus" (1974, p. 218). While surface memories may be more easily recalled, those closer to the pathogenic nucleus are less

so, and may even be disavowed by the patient. Thus, Freud acknowledges that even though the "talking cure" is effective in "affording an outlet" to the patient's "strangulated affects through speech," "[i]t is perfectly hopeless to attempt to make any direct headway towards the nucleus of the pathogenic organization" (p. 221). Because memory, for Freud, is a matter of distortion that makes the original traumatic event available to victims "at best indirectly" (Caruth 1996, p. 16), this idea allows Caruth to theorize trauma as a perpetually "unclaimed experience" (p. 10), forever eluding the grasp of the victim's consciousness.

Caruth then takes up Freud's analysis of the temporality of traumatic memory: since the initial instance of trauma is not fully integrated into the victim's psyche at the time of its occurrence, the victim's experience of trauma is forever experienced as belated. What haunts victims of trauma, then, is "not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known" (Caruth 1996, p. 6). As such, the initial trauma forever exceeds the grasp of the victim's memory, and thus can never be fully claimed. Caruth does not distinguish between individual and collective trauma; rather, she extends the notion of trauma as unclaimed to both, positing that "history is not only the passing on of a crisis but also the passing on of a survival that can only be possessed within a history larger than any single individual or any single generation" (p. 71). Caruth concludes that because trauma exceeds the grasp of any one individual or generation, it is not released or exorcized by testimony, but is instead transmitted from victim to witness, so that the two come to share in the experience of trauma. Testimony, Caruth suggests, is "an act that does not precisely awaken the self, but, rather, *passes the awakening on to others*" (p. 107, original emphasis). In other words, the act of testimony constitutes "not an understanding" of trauma, "but a transmission" (p. 106). Trauma can thus never be fully known to its victims, but only passed on to a listener (a process in which, Caruth argues, we are ethically called to partake), forever reproducing its initial experience.

In an effort to reinvest post-structuralist criticism with a moral imperative, the Yale School critics connect the lack of referentiality between traumatic event and traumatic memory to post-structuralist models of language, emphasizing the lack of referentiality between signifier and signified. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992) draw this comparison in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, approaching trauma from the perspective of DeManian deconstruction and applying it to their study of the Holocaust as an "event without a

witness" (p. 75) that provokes crises of witnessing and of history. The authors build on the loss of referentiality that De Man identifies between sign and referent in order to theorize testimony as a performative rather than solely cognitive act. Caruth draws a similar conclusion in her essay "The Falling Body and the Impact of Reference," in which she outlines De Man's responses to the post-structuralist idea that language cannot adequately refer to anything outside itself. Examining De Man's "The Resistance to Theory," which argues that the discovery of gravity meant that language could no longer adequately describe the world, Caruth suggests that this problem of reference (specifically how to refer to the act of falling) may be seen as "a paradigm for a problem that is central to contemporary theory: the recognition that direct or phenomenal reference to the world means, paradoxically, the production of a fiction; or otherwise put, that reference is radically different from physical law" (1996, p. 76). But far from resigning itself to a lack of correspondence with historical reality, Caruth argues that De Man's association of theory with falling "does not eliminate reference but precisely registers, in language, the impact of an event" (p. 74), the impact being felt "not in the search for an external reference, but in the necessity, and failure, of theory" (p. 90). In other words, the impact of an event is felt in the very struggle (and failure) to delineate the event in language. History and testimony become, for Caruth, performative as much as constative linguistic acts.

Responding to the Call to Empathy: Literature as Witness

Felman and Laub see the performative nature of testimony as a carrier of its own truth, even when this version of the truth may clash with historical records. Laub (1992) uses the example of an Auschwitz survivor, whose testimony of a prisoner uprising includes an inaccurate detail (the explosion of four chimneys instead of a single one). Rather than discount the woman's testimony on the basis of historical inaccuracy, however, Laub advocates investing importance in these narrative inconsistencies as part of the survivor's truth, which carries its own value: "Knowledge in the testimony is, in other words, not simply a factual given that is reproduced and replicated by the testifier, but a genuine advent, an event in its own right" (p. 62). Felman and Laub's theory of the performative nature of testimony combines with Caruth's theory of trauma as unclaimed experience to inform a new theorization of the relationship between reader and text: one which sees the text itself as a testimony whose trauma readers bear an

ethical responsibility to listen to and to share. Listeners to testimony must remain aware of the fact that victims of trauma may "not simply come to convey knowledge that [is] already safely, and exhaustively, in [their] possession," and that it is in fact "the very process of … bearing witness" that helps a victim "come to know of the event" (Laub 1992, p. 62). So too are readers of trauma fiction called to act as witnesses to a text's traumatic subject matter—in effect, to become "participant[s] and co-owner[s] of the traumatic event" (p. 57) contained in the narrative. This understanding of the relationship between reader and text informs the readings of the genre that has come to be known as trauma fiction, which, by mimicking the symptoms of traumatic experience, invokes an empathic identification of the reader with the text. Within this framework, the reader becomes an ethical agent who must "learn how to bond with the narrator in a common struggle to release the testimony which, in spite of inhibitions on both sides, will allow the telling of the trauma to proceed and to reach its testimonial resolution" (Felman and Laub 1992, p. xvii).

An Aesthetic of Trauma

As Anne Whitehead (2004) argues, in order to address readers as witnesses, trauma fiction must adopt a number of formal qualities to resolve the central paradox of how to narrate the unnarratable. In *Trauma Fiction*, Whitehead asks, "If trauma comprises an event or experience which overwhelms the individual and resists language or representation, how then can it be narrativised in fiction?" Her answer is that "the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse and narratives are characterised by repetition and indirection" (p. 3). These texts, Whitehead argues, force readers to pass through the same crisis of memory (and hence, representation) as the traumatized narrator, and, if the texts are effective, readers "cannot avoid registering the shocking and unassimilable nature of [their] subject matter in formal terms" (p. 83). Luckhurst (2008) agrees, identifying in trauma fiction the paradoxical drive to "testify to the impossible possibility of an aesthetics of trauma," and arguing that to "obey the injunction to bear witness to the unpresentable" means employing an aesthetic that is "experimental, fragmented, refusing the consolations of beautiful form, and suspicious of familiar representational and narrative conventions" (p. 81). In order to mimic the forms and symptoms of trauma, trauma fiction both overlaps with and borrows from postmodern

fiction "in its self-conscious deployment of stylistic devices as modes of reflection or critique" (Whitehead 2004, p. 3), in order "to bring conventional narrative techniques to their limit," and in so doing, "seek to foreground the nature and limitations of narrative and to convey the damaging and distorting impact of the traumatic event" (p. 82). Trauma theory sees trauma fiction's formal mimicry of the experience of trauma as an act of witnessing, defined by Caruth as a process not of understanding, but of transmission, in this case from text to reader.

Expanding Caruth's Model of Trauma

Caruth's formulation of trauma has not gone uncontested, however. Rather, a number of recent critics have suggested that the concept, ethics, and aesthetics of trauma be probed to a greater degree than Caruth's work undertakes. For example, Caruth's conflation of individual psychological trauma with collective, or cultural, trauma risks glossing over the specific social factors that may (or may not) give rise to individual psychological anguish as modelled by Freud. As anthropologist A. R. Denham (2008) writes,

> Assumptions of historical trauma research are often presented and accepted as if all social groups experiencing historical trauma … would become prone to dysfunction or exhibit other signs of psychological or social distress. Diagnostic categories frequently compound this tendency by defining social suffering and political upheaval, such as violence, colonialism and poverty, as individual psychological disorders rather than considering social factors and the larger political-economic environment. (p. 393)

Just as clinical practitioners must be cautious about universalizing clinical definitions of trauma and thinking of them as readily applicable to collective groups, so writers, readers, and critics of trauma fiction should be sensitive to the wide and varied range of historical, political, and cultural factors that define victims' experiences and responses.

Adding to the contentiousness of the concept of trauma is what Jeffrey C. Alexander et al. (2004) identifies as a tendency to view trauma naturalistically, rather than as a culturally constructed concept. By suggesting that trauma may be culturally determined, Alexander does not mean to discount the personal experiences of victims but rather to call for more rigorous scholarly approaches to understanding the emergence of trauma

and its shifting definitions. "Indeed," he writes, "it might be said that these commonsense understandings constitute a kind of 'lay trauma theory' in contrast to which a more theoretically reflexive approach to trauma must be erected" (p. 2). Farrell (1998) agrees with Alexander's call for a more critical approach to defining trauma, noting that "[w]hen the idea of trauma moves out of the psychiatrist's office and into the surrounding culture, its clinical definition recedes and its explanatory powers come to the fore" (p. 16). The authors whose work is discussed in the following chapters probe the ubiquity of trauma in contemporary culture—particularly notions of trauma's unlocalizability and ready transmissibility—even as the fiction they write attempts to replicate the experience of bearing witness, whether at a distance or first-hand, to traumatic events both personal and collective.

In addition to conceptual limitations, the notion of a literary trauma theory gives rise to a number of ethical issues. As Martin Modlinger and Philipp Sonntag (2011) write, "If to speak for the other inevitably involves participation in the other's pain, and if to remain silent perpetuates the initial violence and neglects the memory of the other, speaking about other people's pain turns into an ethical minefield" (p. 10). Dominick LaCapra (1998) identifies a risk inherent in Caruth's theory of testimony-as-transmission—that of blurring distinctions between victim and perpetrator of traumatic violence—and calls attention to the risk posed to listeners of undergoing "surrogate victimage," that is, of cheapening victim experience by appropriating it as one's own (p. 182). Similarly, historian Wulf Kansteiner (2004) worries that the concept of cultural trauma is too "morally and politically imprecise" (p. 194), and "turns us all into accomplished survivors" (p. 203). The act of writing trauma presents its own ethical challenges: Susannah Radstone (2011) warns that aestheticized representations of trauma "should be careful not to succumb to voyeuristic and arrogant spectatorship" (p. 9). But even the most sensitive and ethical of texts are subject to pitfalls by virtue of trauma theory's continued reliance on Freudian psychoanalysis as well as on the Holocaust as an exceptional event. This is not to downplay the exceptional horrors of the Holocaust, of course, but rather to accommodate within trauma theory other large-scale traumatic events: particularly those occurring in a non-Western context.[4] Some recent trauma theorists have been sceptical

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[4] For example, the Cambodian genocide, which is the focus of Margaret Drabble's *The Gates of Ivory*, discussed in Chap. 3.

of the privileging of fragmented narratives as representative of an essential experience of trauma. Stef Craps (2014), for example, argues that "there is nothing self-evident about the notion that Western definitions of trauma can be unproblematically exported to other contexts" (p. 48), aiming to reframe trauma theory in a way that is less Eurocentric, and more open to responses to trauma that lie outside of the Western paradigm, while Denham (2008) identifies "strategies of resilience" to collective trauma within indigenous communities, whose "powerful stories, songs, [and] histories" constitute types of responses that communicate collective trauma beyond Freudian pathology, but which are too often obscured (p. 392). This book identifies a shift in recent British trauma fiction, symptomatic of the recent interest in the limits of trauma theory, towards a greater attempt to respond to these ethical pitfalls.

Implications for Trauma Fiction

Despite these caveats, Caruth's model of trauma as unclaimed experience continues to be a foundational idea underpinning the field of literary trauma studies. Luckhurst (2008) notes that Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* "is still the work where lines feeding notions of cultural trauma converge: the problem of aesthetics 'after Auschwitz,' the aporia of representation in poststructuralism, the diverse models of trauma developed by, and in the wake of, Freud" (p. 13). Trauma theory's continued reliance on Caruth's aporetic model of trauma has led recent critics to focus on both the apparent critical stagnation around the notion of trauma's resistance to narration and the limitations of readings of trauma fiction that rely too heavily on this approach.

Roger Luckhurst has recently taken issue with this problem, drawing together both the aesthetic and the ethical issues that plague literary trauma theory. He agrees with Whitehead about the need to testify to "the impossible possibility of an aesthetics of trauma," and that to "obey the injunction to bear witness to the unpresentable" means employing an aesthetic that is "experimental, fragmented, refusing the consolations of beautiful form, and suspicious of familiar representational and narrative conventions" (2008, p. 81). However, in a later essay he critiques the idea of this "aesthetic of trauma," questioning the adequacy of what he calls the "trauma paradigm" (2010, p. 13). Here Luckhurst notes the "initially pleasing paradoxical formulae" that govern much trauma fiction, "where traumatic subjectivity and representation is consistently invoked through a

rhetoric of aporia" (p. 12), or, in other words, a rhetoric of paradoxical inaccessibility or unrepresentability. Luckhurst worries about the consequences of this mode of representation, arguing "that literary, visual and cultural studies have begun to establish a dominant aesthetic, backed by an ethical imperative, in which there is a certain mode in which representations of trauma *should* appear" (p. 12, original emphasis). This trauma paradigm, Luckhurst suggests, is at odds with the need in contemporary media to disseminate images of atrocity as a call to action. Ultimately, Luckhurst bemoans the "delight in aporia and paradox of much trauma theory" which, he argues, is "at odds with more urgent political imperatives to represent and circulate images of atrocity in torturous times" (p. 11). While testifying to the challenges to narration that traumatic experience poses is central to trauma fiction's ethical project, the competing urge to move beyond, in LaCapra's words, "dwell[ing] obsessively on trauma as an unclaimed experience that occasions the paradoxical witness to the breakdown of witnessing" (1998, p. 183) must be addressed. With the emerging trend in trauma theory towards greater ethical awareness come new narrative opportunities beyond the trauma paradigm that has focused primarily on replicating the aporia of traumatic memory.

GOTHIC TIMES

Luckhurst (2010) turns to genre fiction as a literary mode capable of challenging the rhetoric of aporia through which trauma is typically invoked. "The tropes and narratives of genre," he argues, "are good devices with which to think unthinkable or say unsayable things" (p. 17). Contrary to what he calls the "modernist trauma aesthetic" (p. 11), the overcoded narrative tropes typical of genre fiction can mimic, and thus articulate, similarly "overcoded violent histories" in new ways (p. 17). Luckhurst draws specifically on the Gothic, with its highly conventional aesthetic, as an example of such a genre. Other critics support this view; Jerrold Hogle and Andrew Smith (2009) call the Gothic "an important, multi-layered, and profoundly symbolic scheme for dealing with Western culture's most fundamental fears and concerns," not just for its firmly entrenched set of conventions but also for its "cross-generic dynamism," a feature that, according to Hogle and Smith, "has made it so transformable to suit changing times" (p. 1). Piatti-Farnell and Beville (2014) echo this view of the metaphorical amenability of the Gothic, calling the Gothic "a lens through which we

experience, and a voice through which we express, contemporary terrors" (p. 6). Beville (2014) goes on to directly link the Gothic's ingrained set of conventions to a conduit for voicing trauma. "[T]he Gothic," Beville argues, "when it is woven into historical narratives or commemorative texts, carries with it a range of accepted ideas and meanings that aid effective communication in a particular cultural context" … ideas like "anxiety, terror, and trauma" and preparing "a narrative of suspense and horror." The Gothic's particular suitability for challenging what Luckhurst identifies as trauma fiction's rhetoric of aporia is, for Beville its well-established capacity for expressing the "cultural and social anxieties" of "the contemporaneous collective unconscious, speaking of those issues that we are often too fearful to broach and too repressed to acknowledge. Gothic fictions are frequently testimonial in form, speaking of experiences of trauma and repression, and for personal anxieties against dominant discourses of order and regulation." It is the familiar generic structures of the Gothic, combined with the genre's emphasis on "the problematics of memory" that allow it to work as "a medium for historical and cultural translation" of otherwise inexpressible fears and taboos (pp. 64–65).

Of these critics, only Beville addresses the capacity for the Gothic to introduce potential ethical complications into the trauma narratives to which it appears to so readily lend itself, reminding readers that "while they have long been associated with transgression tantamount to social subversion and dissent," both the Gothic and horror "traditionally reinforce social norms and return ultimately to consensus when the monstrous threat or terror has been controlled" (p. 64). The conventions of the Gothic, then, are a double-edged sword: while they allow for ready metaphorical transformation of a society's unspeakable fears, they rely on the assumption of a safe, normative, and commonly held middle distance from which the viewer can regard the horror presented to them on the page or screen. Even with this acknowledgement, however, the particular voyeurism that is embedded within the act of reading Gothic narratives and its impact on the particular ethics of trauma fiction, which are arguably foregrounded more than in any other genre, have yet to be explored in detail. This book seeks to add a more nuanced understanding to the field of trauma studies by examining in more depth the importance of genre—and specifically the gothic—to accomplishing the sort of symbolic transformations that Farrell identifies as being important to coming to grips with the traumatic tensions of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As a trauma specialist, I wish to address the previously unexplored connection between

the spectatorial aspects of the Gothic and trauma fiction, which I believe many contemporary authors are exploiting in ways that are taking trauma fiction in fresh new directions beyond the stale trauma fiction paradigm that has come to dominate the genre.

Meaning and Scope of Contemporary Usages of "Gothic"

The term "Gothic" means many things to many critics, depending on how strict one feels bound to the genre's original eighteenth-century roots. Its use here reflects a general trend within Gothic criticism towards expanding the potential applications of the term. Adding to Piatti-Farnell and Beville's more inclusive approach to the Gothic, Sara Wasson and Emily Alder (2014) contend that, rather than delineate the Gothic as a genre, "increasingly, scholars identify the Gothic as a mode or a 'tone' of writing" that "lends itself more readily to a set, or choice, of defining concepts than to definition by a list of characteristic images or narrative forms" (p. 2). Similarly, Robert Miles (2002) defines the Gothic as "a discursive site crossing the genres" (p. 176), while Michael Gamer (2000) calls the Gothic "a site that *moves*" and which must be defined in part "by its ability to transplant itself *across* forms and media: from narrative into dramatic and poetic modes, and from textual into visual and aural media" (p. 4), emphasizing its diffusion beyond generic restrictions.

Nonetheless, even as a mode or tone of writing, the Gothic can be defined, according to Wasson and Alder (2014), by two elements: the first relates directly to the experience of psychological trauma, characterized by "a disturbing affective lens" that overlays the narrative with either "profound emotional distress or with an unnatural emotional void" (p. 2).[5] The second defining element of the Gothic is "arguably spatial: distressing emotions play out within a confined or claustrophobic environment" (p. 2), following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's contention that the conventions of the Gothic share "a particular spatial model" typically involving "the self massively blocked off from something to which it ought normally to have access," including, for example, "its own past" (1986, p. 12). Manuel Aguirre (2008) elaborates on this spatial model of the Gothic, calling the Gothic universe "one of spaces" (p. 2), with doors opening

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[5] The fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-VI*) includes "numbing of general responsiveness" alongside "persistent symptoms of increased arousal" as characteristics of post-traumatic stress disorder (APA 2000, p. 463). The links between trauma and the Gothic will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

from the everyday "domain of rationality and intelligible events" to "the world of the sublime, terrifying, chaotic Numinous which transcends human reason" (p. 3). For Aguirre, this spatial model explains the prevalence within the Gothic of frame narratives and stories-within-stories. Often these spaces function to produce an air of terror in the mind of audiences or to reflect it on the part of characters.

Hockenhull (2010), for example, identifies in recent British horror films "a disposition towards romanticism and the sublime" in their presentation of landscape, linking this presentation with contemporary landscape painting as well as with a response to collective traumas of the twentieth and twenty-first century (p. 208):

> The turn of the century witnessed the events of September 11 in North America, political and economic volatility, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and global environmental concerns. Little wonder that the visual arts has [*sic*] witnessed a corresponding response, aptly termed an "'aftermath aesthetic', determined by the feelings and actions engaged in after the deluge, heartbreak, or devastation of life." (Hockenhull 2010, p. 223, quoting Sultan 2008, pp. 2–3)

Hockenhull connects these depictions of landscape both to the Gothic and to horror film, tracing both to "the aesthetic theories of eighteenth-century notions of the sublime, and its legacy in nineteenth-century Romantic theory" (p. 208). For Hockenhull, these movements become "more conspicuous at particular junctures in history, such as periods of conflict and unrest" (p. 223). In addition to the two major defining elements of the Gothic that Wasson and Alder identify should be added the following typical conventions: a preoccupation with the uncanny; the presence of the sublime, defined by Edmund Burke as "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror" (2008, p. 36); a profound concern "with the past, conveyed through both historical settings and narrative interruptions of the past into the present" (Spooner 2006, p. 9); and a preoccupation with monstrous and abject forms, all of which are inextricably linked to the discourse of trauma.[6]

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[6] The abject is theorized by Julia Kristeva (1982) as neither subject nor object, sharing "only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to *I*" (p. 2). The abject, for Kristeva, is all that which is composite and which threatens the ideal of the unified self, and is hence cast off as filth. The abject "relates to a *boundary*, and, more particularly, represents the

Gothic Trauma

Luckhurst's appeal to the conventions of the Gothic is not unexpected, given the mode's intimate connection with trauma. Arguably, twentieth- and twenty-first-century criticism of the Gothic (which is heavily slanted towards psychoanalytic readings of Gothic literature) owes as much to Freud as does literary trauma theory. Even criticism favouring a spatial model of the Gothic (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* being the first to articulate itself in opposition to the psycho-analytic) cannot help but identify the "difficulty the story has in getting itself told" as being of prime structural importance (1986, p. 13). Sedgwick goes on to point out how in the Gothic, "[t]he unspeakable occurs on almost every page" (p. 13), calling language a kind of "safety valve between the inside and the outside" (p. 17). By arguing that the privation of lan-guage in the Gothic leads to "all knowledge, even when held in common, becom[ing] solitary, furtive, and explosive" (p. 17), Sedgwick directly (though tacitly) aligns the Gothic narrative with the narrative of trauma via its inaccessibility to victims, and thus with Freudian models of trau-matic memory. Beville (2014) supports this view, arguing that "[t]he most dominant feature of the Gothic … is its capacity for managing the unspeak-able; in particular when that which is unspeakable is an inaccessible and repressed past trauma," a feature that has developed "from a long history of writing the unspeakable though the Gothic mode." Echoing both Sedgwick's identification of the difficulty in communicating its own story and Luckhurst's emphasis on the metaphorical adaptability as key features that tie the Gothic to trauma narratives, Beville goes on to note that "the Gothic is frequently adopted as a metaphorical structure and also as a dominant aesthetic in much writing that concerns itself with pushing the limits of the communicable" (2014, p. 52). The link between the Gothic's concern with an unspeakable past and the repressed trauma as theorized

object jettisoned out of that boundary, its other side, a margin" (p. 69). "And yet," Kristeva argues, "from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master" (p. 2). In the context of the Gothic, the abject presents a point of entry into understanding the overdetermined Gothic villain or monster, which Jack Halberstam (1991) argues "always represents the disruption of categories, the destruction of boundaries, and the presence of impurities" (p. 27), whether or not the narratives that peddle the monster as impure can, in fact, be trusted. Jerrold Hogle (2002) connects the Kristevan abject directly with the "Gothic others or spaces" that "can abject myriad cultural and psychological contradictions," in order to confront audiences with "the hidden reality that oppositions of all kinds cannot maintain their separations," and "that each 'lesser term' is contained in its counterpart" (p. 11).

by Freud has become an almost foregone conclusion within Gothic criticism.

Freud's publication of "The Uncanny" in 1919, in which he theorizes the concept of the *unheimlich* as the sudden appearance of the unfamiliar and threatening at the heart of the domestic and familiar, is connected to his model of traumatic memory in that both "procee[d] from something familiar which has been repressed" (1995, p. 148); in the case of trauma, memory of an initial traumatic locus lies buried in the victim's psyche only to return to haunt the victim when reactivated by a secondary event, prompting Freud and Breuer (1974) to declare that "the hysteric suffers mainly from reminiscences" (p. 4). Freud turns to literature in illustrating his theory of the uncanny, since literature is, in his words, "a much more fertile province than the uncanny in real life, for it contains the whole of the latter and something more besides, something that cannot be found in real life" (1995, p. 150). This is especially true of Gothic literature, in which the uncanny as well as narrative intrusions of a repressed past upon the present are common features; for example, Jerrold E. Hogle (2002) argues that "[t]he Gothic … provides the best-known examples of those strange and ghostly figures that Freud saw as examples of 'the Uncanny'" (p. 6), while Spooner (2006) notes that the genre "is profoundly concerned with the past, conveyed through both historical settings and narrative interruptions of the past into the present" (p. 9).

More recent criticism has sought to further theorize the connection between Freudian psychoanalysis and the Gothic by reading both the initial wave of Gothic novels that emerged in the eighteenth century (e.g., Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*), as well as contemporary Gothic cultural productions (e.g., Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*), through a Freudian psychoanalytic lens. For example, Steven Bruhm (2002) sees the Gothic as being "readily analyzed through the rhetoric of psychoanalysis," arguing that the Gothic was "a rich source of imagery for Freud" and calling Freud's psychoanalytic accounts "intensely Gothic" (p. 261).[7] Ultimately, Bruhm concludes that Freudian psychoanalysis cannot be separated from the Gothic tropes Freud uses to articulate his theories and posits that the intimate connection between Freudian psychoanalysis and the Gothic is especially true in the context of Gothic texts written in the wake of Freud, in which a metafictional awareness always

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[7] Bruhm names, in addition to "The Uncanny," Freud's "A Seventeenth-Century Demonological Neurosis" as an example.

overlays the already inextricably linked discourses: "What makes the contemporary Gothic contemporary," he writes, "is not merely the way Freudian dynamics underlie Gothic narratives … but how contemporary Gothic texts and films are intensely *aware* of this Freudian rhetoric and self-consciously *about* the longings and fears it describes" (p. 262, original emphasis). For Bruhm, such works differ from Gothic works predating Freud, in which Freudian psychoanalysis is merely one of many ideological lenses through which the Gothic text can be read. What distinguishes the former from the latter, then, is that in the contemporary Gothic, "the Freudian machinery is more than a tool for discussing narrative; it is in large part the subject matter of the narrative itself," and that "the contemporary Gothic subject is the psychoanalytic subject (and vice versa)" (p. 262).

Bruhm expands this interchangeability to the Gothic narrative as a whole. Calling the Gothic "analogous to trauma," and even "the product and enactment of trauma," Bruhm sees the characters in Gothic narratives as, consequently, victims of trauma who "have lost the very psychic structures that allow them access to their own experiences" (p. 268). Reading the Gothic subject as also the victim of trauma aligns the Gothic's aesthetic, dominated by "[i]mages of haunting, destruction and death, obsessive return to the shattering moment, forgetfulness or unwanted epiphany" (p. 268), with Caruth's model of trauma. Like Luckhurst, Bruhm makes a case for the Gothic as an aesthetic and structure suited to the paradoxical task of articulating trauma's resistance to narration (though, again like Luckhurst, he assumes the Gothic to be an inherently ethical mode of representation—an assumption that is somewhat limiting).

This idea of the suitability of the Gothic to reproducing, even transmitting something of the experience of trauma to readers might even go back as far as Edmund Burke's writings on the sublime, in which he argues that "[n]o passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear. For fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain" (2008, p. 53). These words seem almost to anticipate Caruth's theory of the transmissibility of trauma through narrative centuries later. But the amenability of the Gothic is not limited to conveying the impacts of trauma on the individual psyche. For example, Yolanda Gampel, an award-winning psychoanalyst whose specialty is trauma of the kind experienced by the children of the Holocaust and by victims of more recent social violence around the globe, connects the Freudian uncanny with collective trauma. Building on Freud's defini-

tion of the uncanny as "a normative human experience that represents something primary, already experienced which has been repressed" (2000, p. 19), Gampel advocates that this definition be broadened

> to include frightening experiences that cannot be expressed in words, and not to restrict the concept merely to primary infant experiences that have been repressed. For, in the social historical context, the uncanny—the dread and horror of social violence—is itself primary, as it has been repeatedly experienced in the history of [the twentieth] century. As such, although it belongs to the familiar, it is hidden and dangerous. (p. 49)

In much the same way as Bruhm, Gampel connects the uncanny to trauma by way of the two concepts' shared resistance to expression and by a return of a repressed horror at the heart of the familiar: the event which, in Felman and Laub's terms, "lie[s] in excess of our frames of reference" (1992, p. 5).

In addition to its connection to the notion of trauma's resistance to narration as well as to the Freudian return of the repressed, the consensus within Gothic criticism that views the Gothic mode as a response to sociopolitical anxieties supports the Gothic's ties to collective as well as individual trauma. Jessica Bomarito (2006) reads the eighteenth-century Gothic as a phenomenon that emerged "largely in response to anxiety over the change in social and political structure brought about by such events as the French Revolution, the rise in secular-based government, and the rapidly changing nature of the everyday world brought about by scientific advances and industrial development" (p. 1). This idea of the Gothic, as a mode through which otherwise unspeakable anxieties may be expressed, persists in a contemporary context. Bomarito herself argues that "[s]ince its inception, the Gothic genre in literature has undergone numerous changes and adaptations, but its essential role as a means of depicting humanity's deepest, darkest fears and otherwise unspeakable evils—both real and imagined—has endured" (2006, p. 2). Similarly, Gilda Williams (2007) calls the Gothic "particularly serviceable in periods of crisis" both today and in the eighteenth century (p. 19). The crux of the Gothic's role as what Williams calls an "escape valve" for "political, artistic and technological crises" (p. 19) seems to lie in the genre's very reliance on convention, which provides a means of "troping" (Hartman 1995, p. 538) that which has not yet been fully integrated into a society's frame of reference in a way that acknowledges both the terror and the challenges to represen-

tation that lie at the heart of traumatic experience. The Gothic's emphasis on unspeakable anxieties and the casting off of these anxieties onto abject forms makes it an apt example of Luckhurst's argument that the conventions of genre are a privileged means of articulating the traumatic. As Spooner (2006) argues, "[the] Gothic provides a language and a set of discourses with which we can talk about fear and anxiety, rather than being reducible to whatever fear happens to be promoted by the media at any given time" (p. 30). Similarly, Michelle A. Massé (2012) writes that Freudianism and the Gothic "are cousins" and that "[t]he Gothic arises out of the immediate needs of the reading public to … articulate and define the turbulence of their psychic existence" (p. 309). These views suggest that the Gothic is, much like trauma itself, as deeply sociopolitical as it is psychological.

Beville's discussion of what she calls "Gothic-postmodernism" suggests that the Gothic's role in voicing collective anxieties is all the more crucial in a contemporary context. Her analysis hinges on three major points: first, she proposes a new category of "Gothic-postmodernism" to refer to "a hybrid genre" which "emerges from the dialogic interaction between Gothic and postmodern characteristics of a given text" (2009, p. 9). These texts are postmodern in the sense of being "experimental, radical and often metafictional literature which problematizes the relationship between reality and fiction, reader and text," but they also evoke the Gothic by way of "the core of the genre, its terror," as well as "the Gothic sublime and its concern with the unrepresentable" in order to provide what is, in Beville's view, "the clearest mode of expression in literature for voicing the terrors of postmodernity, a mode that is far from dead and in fact rejuvenated in the present context of increased global terrorism" (2009, p. 8).[8]

This evocation of the sublime, the terrifying, and the unrepresentable further links the Gothic to trauma fiction by way of the postmodern narrative techniques upon which trauma fiction often relies to convey trauma's damaging psychic impact and fundamental resistance to narration. For

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[8] Here Beville is likely relying on Burke's contention that what is "dark, uncertain, confused, [and] terrible" is "sublime to the last degree" (Burke 2008, pp. 102–103). Beville is not the only critic to have picked up on this particular aspect of Burke's argument in order to emphasize terror and a concern for the unrepresentable as core elements of the Gothic; Wright (2007) argues that "Burke demonstrates with force that terror, intimately connected with the fear of subjection and death, is the 'ruling principle of the sublime'" (p. 40), and that "By challenging the certainties of representation, the Gothic sublime continues to challenge the essence of representability" (p. 56).

Beville, the specific "terrors of postmodernity" stem, in an additional link to literary trauma theory, from a crisis of representation. Beville's hybridization of the Gothic and the postmodern connects the Gothic to trauma fiction once again, this time aesthetically, through the surprising commonalities it shares with the postmodern narrative strategies upon which trauma fiction relies in order to mimic the forms and symptoms of trauma.

Can the Gothic Be Contemporary? Can the Contemporary Be Gothic?

As the above theoretical approaches suggest, a major trend in contemporary Gothic criticism has been to seek out applications of the Gothic beyond its eighteenth-century roots. Gilda Williams (2007) offers perhaps the broadest theorization of the Gothic; she examines the presence of Gothic tropes in both literature and contemporary art, but stresses that many of the artists she calls "Gothic" would not do so themselves, nor do they operate exclusively within a purely "Gothic" tradition. Williams argues that "Gothic" is "necessarily a partial term which serves mostly to identify a peculiar, dark sensitivity shared by the artist and the observer who has chosen to respond to the work in this manner ... all without concern for the contradictions and anachronisms therein" (p. 13). The broadening of what constitutes "Gothic" does not, in Williams's view, weaken the term, however, but rather "contributes to making it so evocative and resilient" (p. 13). Wasson and Alder (2014) share Williams's inclusivity, arguing that the Gothic was, from its inception, a hybrid form:

> Gothic tropes have sprung up in other nineteenth-century literary forms and modes: stage plays and Romantic poetry, the sensation fiction of Wilkie Collins and the urban London of Charles Dickens and G. W. M. Reynolds all feature an uncanny ambience, revelations of family secrets and nested narratives, along with associated stock characters of the Gothic. This profusion of texts began to blur any perceived dividing line circumscribing the Gothic as a genre. (p. 2)

This trend has led the range of works considered Gothic to be expanded considerably; however, this approach of uncoupling the Gothic from its specific eighteenth-century historical milieu is not without detractors. Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall (2001), in particular, call this trend a "collapse of history into universal psychology" which "has been a consistent

feature of Gothic Criticism since at least the 1930s" (p. 276). They denounce the anxiety model of the Gothic, writing that "Gothic Criticism now functions as a 'Gothic' form of discourse in its own right, compelled to reproduce what it fails to understand" (p. 279). Gothic criticism cannot be allowed to coalesce exclusively around the mode's apparent preoccupation with the ineffable and the unspeakable. However, the recent proliferation of Gothic forms in contemporary culture cannot be ignored, nor does it threaten the mode's eighteenth-century origins. Rather, there are cultural parallels that can be made between the eighteenth century and today that suggest an explanation for this proliferation. The "collective experience of historical shock" (1998, p. 5) that Farrell argues has given rise to a contemporary "post-traumatic culture" is, for example, analogous to the sociopolitical anxieties that are seen as having birthed the Gothic. Additionally, the contemporary witness's hyper-mediated experience of twentieth- and twenty-first-century traumatic violence can also be traced to the eighteenth century.[9] These similarities and the inclusivity that informs recent Gothic criticism also inform the readings of the novels that follow. The novels discussed in the following chapters would be classified as works of trauma fiction before they would be classified as Gothic, but are works that nonetheless "participate" in the Gothic in the sense Jacques Derrida (1992) elaborates in "The Law of Genre" (p. 230).[10]

Beyond the Trauma Paradigm

Ironically, the concerns Baldick and Mighall raise about the Gothic echo the concerns raised by Luckhurst regarding trauma theory: the critical stagnation of the Gothic around the unspeakable is analogous to the critical stagnation of trauma theory around the "rhetoric of aporia" that

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[9] This notion follows Mary Favret's argument in *War at a Distance* that the origins of the contemporary experience of wartime as an event occurring "at a distance, outside and beyond our reach" and yet "somehow fugitive and omnipresent at one" can be located in the Romantic period (p. 4). Her study of literature and art produced during the Napoleonic wars suggests that these wars are distinctly contemporary in part due to their infiltration into everyday life by a burgeoning print media, which made wartime "less … an object of cognition bounded by dates … and more … an affecting experience which resonates beyond the here and now" (p. 11). Favret's theorization of modern warfare as part of the "long eighteenth century" is discussed in detail in Chap. 3.

[10] Derrida (1992) proposes that "a text would not *belong* to any genre. Every text *participates* in one or several genres, there is no genreless text, there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging" (p. 230, original emphasis).

governs much trauma fiction. In the way trauma seems to have morphed from clinical diagnosis to a defining feature of the postmodern experience, so has the Gothic morphed, in recent years, from an oft-dismissed literature of the margins to a mode that now dominates a vast array of cultural productions.

This book considers whether a re-examination of the affinities between the Gothic and psychological trauma can shed new light on the capabilities of both modes of writing and finds that, indeed, the use of the Gothic in recent British trauma fiction interrogates, and troubles, many of trauma fiction's ethical assumptions. Trauma fiction has become an unlikely challenger to Sedgwick's notion that "[n]o other modern literary form as influential as the Gothic has also been as pervasively conventional" (1986, p. 9). But while the two modes' shared concern with the unspeakable and the return of the repressed has been acknowledged by Bruhm and Luckhurst, the aesthetic and ethical challenges raised by the Gothic and their connection to those same challenges that are currently plaguing trauma fiction remain unexplored. The lack of critical attention to the clash between the pleasurable excesses of the Gothic and the ethical imperative of trauma theory (and, arguably, of trauma fiction) is a void that this book aims to fill. As trauma theory seeks to move beyond dwelling on mere unspeakability, it must address its own assumptions of ethical purity, and it is my contention as a trauma studies scholar that the spectatorial aspects of the Gothic that the authors I study here exploit call out these assumptions within trauma studies as a field in productive and necessary ways.

Gothic Voyeurism

The Gothic is not as consumed exclusively with producing terror as Beville suggests here. Rather, the Gothic is at least as interested in provoking in readers a kind of pleasurable voyeurism. As early as the mid-seventeenth century, early Gothicists were identifying this aspect of the genre. Burke writes that he is "convinced we have a degree of delight, and that no small one, in the real misfortunes and pains of others," and that "there is no spectacle we so eagerly pursue, as that of some uncommon and grievous calamity" (2008, pp. 42–43). Burke's contemporary, Anna Letitia Aikin (1773), agrees, arguing in "On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror" that "[t]he reality of this source of pleasure seems evident from daily observation. The greediness with which the tales of ghosts and gob-

lins, or murders, earthquakes, fires, shipwrecks, and all the most terrible disasters attending human life, are devoured by every ear" (p. 120). In commenting on Aikin's work, Wright (2007) acknowledges the paradoxical nature of consuming these types of narratives, noting "the seemingly immoral pleasure gained from terror, experienced even by virtuous, benevolent readers" and suggesting that we are motivated by "the violence inherent in curiosity" even as we are compelled "to endure torture in order to reach the end of a narrative" (pp. 42–44), and these comments signal a greater movement within Gothic criticism towards acknowledging the Gothic's moral ambivalence.

Critics have indeed begun to focus on the ways in which the Gothic straddles the boundary between confronting its audiences with horror and distancing them from it. For example, Spooner (2006) writes that traditionally the Gothic has seemed "to perform a particular kind of cultural work, a means through which Western culture could displace its fears into an exotic, distanced other and thus feel safe" (pp. 20–21). Similarly, Hogle (2002) attributes the longevity of the Gothic to its complicity in allowing readers to "address *and* disguise some of the most important desires, quandaries, and sources of anxiety, from the most internal and mental to the widely social and cultural, throughout the history of western culture since the eighteenth century" (p. 4, emphasis added). Hogle suggests that the Gothic "disguis[es] its abjections in highly displaced locations and spectres" while allowing audiences to maintain "a posture of convenient middle distance from these that both admits their attractions and condemns their excesses in the end" (p. 18). Hogle's idea of the Gothic's core audience is one of spectators who would just as likely adopt a posture of non-implication in the violence depicted in the text as engage empathically as witnesses to a narrative of trauma. Spooner (2006) calls this process the "psychological distancing from horror," arguing that audiences typically seek out Gothic narratives to reinforce the safety and security of their own position as viewer (p 20). For these reasons, Wright (2007) calls the Gothic "a genre predicated upon a violent form of voyeurism" (p. 108), while Coral Ann Howells (1995) describes readers of the Gothic as "literary voyeurs, always gazing at emotional excess without understanding the why of it" (p. 15). The passivity and helplessness that these critics emphasize in readers aid in further tying the Gothic to trauma fiction as a genre that similarly seeks to transmit to readers the pain and uncertainty of the traumatic experience that otherwise evades understanding. Wright (2007) even goes so

far as to point out the affinity readers of Gothic fiction have with "victims as well as complicit literary voyeurs," an affinity that "is self-consciously represented within Gothic fiction" (p. 110). This relationship is fruitful ground for exploration from the perspective of literary trauma studies.

There exists a clear tension, then, between the Gothic's ability to confront its readers with horror and to provide a safe and convenient distance from which to observe the horrifying. Crucially, this voyeuristic aspect of the Gothic complicates the critical perception of the Gothic as a privileged mode for voicing the testimony of trauma and, in so doing, evoking the empathic response that trauma theory expects of readers. I would argue, however, that this complication of trauma theory's ethical imperative is productive. Not only does the capacity of the Gothic to complicate trauma theory's ethical project add nuance to the field of literary trauma studies (which is my goal as a trauma studies scholar interested in what the field is able to accomplish moving forward) but it also adds new depth to the field of Gothic studies, allowing critics to move beyond the unspeakable as the core of the genre towards new possibilities, and continue to move Gothic literature out of the margins and into new critical domains.

The Gothic in Recent British Trauma Fiction

British trauma fiction's participation in the Gothic may be seen as an expression of "historical shock" at the turn of the twenty-first century (which is analogous not only to that of the nineteenth century as Farrell points out but also to the historical circumstances that gave rise to the Gothic in the eighteenth century) and as a response to the related crisis of representation brought about by the contemporary individual's highly mediated and spectatorial relationship to twentieth- and twenty-first-century violence. This book comprises five chapters, each focusing on a different example of recent British trauma fiction that pushes the boundaries of what trauma fiction and the Gothic have traditionally been seen as capable of doing. It begins with Martin Amis's "nuclear" narrative, *London Fields* (1989); followed by Margaret Drabble's *The Gates of Ivory* (1990), a novel about the Cambodian genocide; Ian McEwan's World War II historical novel, *Atonement* (2001); a comparative analysis of Pat Barker's post-World War I novel *Regeneration* (1991) and post-9/11 novel, *Double Vision* (2003); and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005), a dystopian novel centring on forced organ donation and human cloning. Over the course of these six texts, a progression can be traced

towards greater self-reflexivity and awareness of the ethical contradictions existing within literary trauma studies: contradictions that are obscured by trauma criticism's ethical imperative of seeing readers as uniformly empathic, but that are brought to light by the Gothic tropes and structures appearing in these narratives.

While each novel focuses on a different example of collective trauma (which characters experience from positions of varying degrees of relative safety, whether geographical or temporal), these characters are confronted with, and impacted by, an instance of personal trauma which is tied up in the collective one. This personal trauma offers an opportunity for greater understanding of traumatic experience through empathic connection either between the protagonist-witness and the victim, or between the reader-witness and the protagonist-victim; however, often the distinction between witness and victim is blurred (enacting Caruth's theory of the unlocalizability of trauma). A number of narrative techniques are employed in order to mimic the forms and symptoms of trauma, including intrusion, repetition, aphasia, digression, and misdirection. This mimicry invites (or compels) readers to partake in the text's trauma, whether that means sharing in the process of empathic connection between victim and witness as played out between or among characters or enacting that process more or less directly with the traumatized narrator. By fulfilling the ethical imperative laid out by Caruth, the novels follow in rather conventional fashion Luckhurst's trauma paradigm, with this narrative pattern placing each novel in line with the ethical project trauma theory (and trauma fiction) sets out to complete: to suggest both writing and reading trauma as healing acts.

What makes these novels diverge from trauma fiction's ethical project is that, inevitably, the opportunity for empathy they present is shown to be inadequate, either through the revelation of the moral limits of the protagonist-witness that impede him/her from responding ethically to the victim or through their techniques of casting doubt on the novel's own ability to evoke an empathic response in its readers. Contrary to trauma theory's inherent belief in the use of narrative as a means of "working-through" (Freud 1950, p. 147), these novels show the empathic response to be impeded by the very act of representation (which often enacts its own form of violence against victims). The narratives' surface ethics thus often belie darker, more voyeuristic urges both in characters and in the readers who act as witnesses. Each text's participation in the Gothic—a genre which straddles the line between voicing the repressed, otherwise

unspeakable subject of trauma and foregrounding the position of safety from which witnesses, and readers, can comfortably regard the pain of others—creates a rigorous questioning of trauma theory's underlying ethical assumptions. The notion of reading as ethical practice, while not refuted entirely, must, in these texts, contend with the inherent biases and ulterior motives embedded within the acts of representation and of reading, which each text's use of the Gothic foregrounds.

Chapter 2 introduces the Gothic's preoccupation with the ineffable and its role in conveying the hyper-mediated experience of trauma at the turn of the twentieth to twenty-first century, specifically as it applies to the spectral nature of the threat of nuclear war. The chapter explores how Martin Amis's *London Fields* conveys the contemporary subject's hyper-mediated relationship to the Cold War by drawing on Gothic conventions in order to convey both the impossibility and the absurdity involved in attempting to imagine oneself out of existence. *London Fields* makes use of the Gothic as a mode of bearing witness to the nuclear sublime: the terminally ill and self-described "pre-nuked and dead already" (Amis 1989, p. 323) protagonist, Samson Young, embodies the figure of the living dead navigating a decaying London, whose dark, brooding, and desolate atmosphere reflects the narrator-author's shattered psyche. The recurring images of black holes and event horizons function as Gothic spaces, and Samson's keen awareness of how the narrative is rushing him towards his own annihilation as towards a black hole destabilizes received notions of the novel's ability to bear witness to the violence it seeks to describe.

Chapter 3 builds on Chap. 2's introduction of the Gothic as a mode preoccupied with the too-big-to-be-grasped, this time by introducing the notion of the threshold as a Gothic trope through which "two things that should have remained apart … are brought together, with terrifying consequences" (Williams 2007, p. 14). The chapter explores how Margaret Drabble's *The Gates of Ivory* highlights the challenges to witnessing and responding to trauma by confronting protagonist Liz Headland with the task of locating her missing novelist friend Stephen Cox, who has disappeared in Cambodia while writing a play about Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. The novel's participation in the Gothic on the level of structure and trope expresses the terror on the part of the witness that comes from encountering her responsibility for trauma represented in the media and viewed at a distance—an act which Susan Sontag (2003) argues is a "quintessential modern experience" (p. 18). In line with Sontag's

arguments in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, *The Gates of Ivory* seeks to rupture the supposed "we" that exists when regarding images of atrocity, and instead expose the latent anxiety of responsibility that underlies the witness's relationship to such images and narratives. By rendering personal the collective trauma of the Khmer Rouge regime (such as via Liz's encounter in a resettlement camp on the Thailand-Cambodia border with grieving Cambodian mother and Pol Pot victim Mme Savet Akrun), the novel offers Liz an opportunity to cast off the veil of unimplicated viewership promoted by the media, and accept her implication in the colonial abuses that in some ways led to, and persist in the wake of, Pol Pot's Cambodia.

Chapter 4 shifts from exploring the Gothic's role in expressing the experience of victim (Samson) and witness (Liz) to trauma, towards articulating how the recognizability of Gothic conventions functions to interrogate the ethics of both writing and reading trauma fiction. While Chap. 3 touches on representation (specifically, Orientalist constructions of the East) as its own form of violence, this chapter delves more deeply into the subject, arguing that Ian McEwan's *Atonement* metafictionally registers the ethical issues present for writers seeking to produce an aestheticized representation of the trauma of another. Taking up Paul Crosthwaite's contention that McEwan's novel conveys the belatedness of Briony Tallis's personal trauma and seeks to transmit this experience to the reader through the "initially unassimilable rupture" (2007, p. 63) that the revelation of Briony's authorship causes, this chapter argues that the novel treats the subject of traumatic memory self-reflexively, using the Gothic both "as a lens through which to perceive the everyday and the present," and as "a view on the instability of the past" (Beville 2014, p. 53). Specifically, the chapter focuses on how *Atonement* employs a metagothic strategy in order to both question the validity of cultural memory of traumatic events and to cast doubt on Briony's assertion that she has written the novel in order to atone for her false accusation of Robbie for the rape of her cousin Lola.

Chapter 5 undertakes a comparative analysis of two novels by Pat Barker: *Regeneration* and *Double Vision*. By analysing each novel's use of Gothic tropes alongside one another, I examine how British trauma fiction negotiates collective violence on either side of the millennium, and particularly on either side of the cataclysmic events of 9/11. While *Regeneration* has received near universal acclaim for its treatment of the relationship between art and testimony, trauma and witnessing, its later counterpart, *Double*

Vision, has received something of an unfair treatment by critics. In this chapter, I argue that Barker's later novel in fact picks up on many of the explorations and critiques of the ethics of trauma, testimony, and healing that *Regeneration* began, but with a greater emphasis on how the spectatorship that has come to characterize twenty-first-century acts of witnessing. What emerges from an examination of the Gothic in each of these novels, then, is a shift towards greater self-reflexivity and self-awareness that enacts on a micro scale the larger trend I identify within trauma fiction and literary trauma studies. While *Regeneration* engages with some of the ethical debates around testimony and witnessing, *Double Vision* denies ethical possibilities altogether, a move that could be accounted for by the highly mediated events of 9/11 that produced their own crisis of witnessing, and which feature prominently in the later novel.

Chapter 6 explores Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as an example of how trauma fiction might exploit the conventions of the Gothic to display greater ethical awareness, offering a potential solution to the ethical issues raised in Chaps. 3 and 4. The protagonist, "Kathy H.," struggles to voice the traumatic realization of her fate as a cloned organ donor, withholding full disclosure from the reader for much of the narrative. Though she narrates as though her imagined audience is made up of clones like herself, the lack of frank discussion of the role Kathy and her friends play in society indicates a forbidden knowledge that haunts her narration, which often inadvertently reveals repressed feelings. Rather than confront the horror that underlies her existence directly, Kathy's oblique references to the fate that awaits her and her friends as donors is marked by her use of Gothic tropes, allowing Ishiguro to present "coded models of contemporary human rights issues" (Levy 2011, p. 1) aside from those directly related to genetic manipulation. However, beyond giving voice to social anxieties around the ethics of cloning, the Gothic builds into Ishiguro's novel an additional layer of self-reflexivity that makes readers feel increasingly uncomfortable with the roles and responsibilities of witnessing and testimony. In this way, *Never Let Me Go* is arguably the most progressive example of trauma fiction's participation in the Gothic discussed here.

While trauma theory assumes readers to be empathic actors whose ethical response to the text-as-testimony is inevitable, the six novels discussed here present a call to empathy that is not always answered—at least not without some degree of impediment. Indeed, barriers to empathy are often related to the very act of fictionalization, an issue which each novel's participation in the familiar conventions of the Gothic highlights.

The self-reflexive qualities of each of these novels that occur alongside their varying degrees of participation in the Gothic mode take the deferral of comprehension of contemporary collective traumas to a metafictional level, calling attention to their stylized representation in order to comment on the relationship between writing and witnessing. Maria Beville's identification of the Gothic's concern with terror and the unrepresentable as the core of the genre aligns with the inaccessibility of traumatic memory as defined by Caruth; however, the Gothic's competing drive to distance audiences psychologically from horror (reinforcing their safety and security) must also be considered if we, like Luckhurst, are to situate the Gothic as a privileged mode for writing trauma. As the Gothic allows readers to adopt a comfortable middle distance between horror and pleasurable consumption, so too does any fictionalized representation of trauma. The oscillation between identification and distance that these authors' participation in the Gothic foregrounds exists in tension with trauma theory's attempt to "'read the wound' with the aid of literature" (Hartman 1995, p. 1).

Much as Sontag (2003) casts doubt on the "hypothetical shared experience" (p. 6) of regarding other people's pain, what these works' use of the Gothic suggests is that there should be no assumed audience of trauma fiction that is universally vulnerable, responsive, or empathic. Rather, the Gothic's concern with that which exceeds comprehension and representation may risk, as LaCapra suggests, lingering obsessively on the unclaimed experience of trauma. Indeed, the propensity of the Gothic to defer a confrontation with trauma through dealing in distancing strategies and pleasurable excess poses a challenge to the idea of trauma fiction's ability, suggested by Hartman, to restore reading as ethical practice. The presence of Gothic tropes in these six works of recent British trauma fiction together point to the need for a more rigorous questioning of the assumption of a unified audience whose response is capable of being accurately predicted.

My critical stance is one that seeks to strengthen the ties between trauma fiction and the Gothic, both by re-reading the similarities that they share (their origins within periods of rapid historical change, their concern with crises of representation and the unspeakable, their emphasis on Freudian psychology, etc.) and by exploring previously uncharted territory (the ethical implications of the more lurid aspects of the Gothic and how these may be brought to bear on the notion of trauma theory as a fundamentally ethical form of criticism). With this perspective in mind, I intend in this volume to reveal how in several examples of recent British

trauma fiction, experimentations within the Gothic genre that take place alongside each novel's concern with trauma, testimony, and representation are breaking new ground within the field of trauma studies that is crucial if the field is to continue to live up to its own ethical imperative.

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Beyond the Event Horizon: Witnessing the Nuclear Sublime in Martin Amis's *London Fields*

Written in 1989, but set at the end of the twentieth century, Martin Amis's *London Fields* addresses traumatic tensions involved in bearing witness to the threat of total nuclear annihilation—tensions which, as Daniel Cordle argues, do not cease to be pressing with the fall of the Berlin Wall—and locates these apprehensions within a general climate of nuclear anxiety.[1] The surreal and metafictional narrative follows Samson Young, a terminally ill American writer living in London; Keith Talent, a philanderer, darts aficionado, and self-proclaimed "cheat" (Amis 1989, p. 6); the wealthy Guy Clinch and his monstrous son Marmaduke; and Nicola Six, a woman who seemingly possesses the preternatural awareness of her own impending murder, and who adopts various disguises to seduce and manipulate men, including Keith, Guy, and Samson. Samson is certain that Keith is Nicola's murderer, and sets out to simply record the event of Nicola's death and the circumstances leading up to it (though his strange dreams, hallucinatory episodes, and deep self-doubt repeatedly call into question his reli-

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[1] In "Cultures of Terror: Nuclear Criticism During and Since the Cold War," Cordle calls for a revival of nuclear criticism as a mode of inquiry. Though popular during the Cold War, such criticism was, Cordle contends, too easily dismissed by critics after the fall of the Iron Curtain. He argues for "a New Nuclear Criticism" that can "in part, revisit 'nuclear' texts of the Cold War era, reading them with perspectives made possible by the post-Cold War perspective. It can also, though, embark on a more radical enterprise, questioning the simple assumption that nuclear issues ceased to be pressing with the fall of the Berlin Wall, tracing the morphing of nuclear anxiety into other fears, and contextualizing contemporary conceptions of 'terror' in terms of an earlier geopolitics of nuclear anxiety" (2006, p. 1186).

ability as narrator). In the end it is Samson himself who takes on the role of Nicola's murderer, apparently so that Nicola's prophecy might be fulfilled. The entire narrative takes place under the shadow of the looming "Crisis" (p. 64), an apocalyptic endpoint that hints at nuclear cataclysm.

As a work of metafiction, *London Fields* is deeply concerned with the difficulty of writing, particularly within a nuclear context, and grapples with the impossibility and absurdity involved in attempting to imagine oneself out of existence. The general atmosphere of social violence invoked by the threat of nuclear war is tied up in both Samson and Nicola's personal traumas: in addition to bearing witness to nuclear anxiety on a collective scale, Samson (who both narrates and claims authorship of the novel) also grapples with an unnamed and unresolved personal trauma suffered at London Fields nuclear facility that has led to the apparent radiation poisoning that is slowly killing him. Nicola, too, is haunted by personal trauma: her apparent foreknowledge of her murder (which will occur at midnight on Bonfire Night, her thirty-fifth birthday), stems from an intense fear of aging which is symptomatic of her continual victimization by a violent, sexually exploitative, and misogynistic culture. While the novel conveys the vicissitudes of bearing witness to nuclear holocaust by deploying a litany of postmodern characteristics, it is the novel's Gothic tone that provides a framework for understanding the damaging impact of both collective and individual trauma on the psyche of the novel's characters, allowing these characters to articulate their testimony in the face of challenges to narration. *London Fields* thus goes beyond simply rehearsing the "rhetoric of aporia" (Luckhurst, "Beyond Trauma" 12) invoked by much trauma fiction (as well as, notably, much Gothic criticism).[2]

Because it threatens total human annihilation, nuclear war, like the Holocaust, may be thought of as what Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub identify as an event that produces a crisis of history and, consequently, of representation. Felman and Laub interpret the Holocaust's "uniquely devastating aspect" as "a radical historical crisis of witnessing, and as the unprecedented, inconceivable, historical occurrence of 'an event without

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[2] See, for example, Luckhurst's "The Contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the 'Spectral Turn,'" a study of the revival of Gothic imagery in contemporary literary depictions of London, in which Luckhurst asks whether "this Gothic revival and its fascination with its own generic past [is] anything other than self-referential involution—a kind of return of the repressed 'return of the repressed' as empty postmodern pastiche?" (2002, p. 530).

a witness'—an event eliminating its own witness" (1992, p. xvii). The Holocaust, the authors suggest, challenges conventional representations of trauma both through the control of information and through the physical elimination of witnesses that took place at the moment of its execution:

> [W]hat precisely made a Holocaust out of the event is the unique way in which, during its historical occurrence, the event produced no witnesses. Not only, in effect, did the Nazis try to exterminate the physical witnesses of their crime, but the inherently incomprehensible and deceptive psychological structure of the event precluded its own witnessing, even by its very victims. (p. 80)

Felman and Laub identify two defining characteristics of the Holocaust that render the event unique in its resistance to representation: its elimination of both victims and potential outsider witnesses,[3] and the paradox by which the more is known about it, the more it exceeds comprehension. While the Holocaust is exceptional in its size and scope (in terms not limited to the number of casualties, the implication of all levels of German society, and the control of information by the Nazi government), certain characteristics of trauma theory's central paradigm may be exported to other contexts, like nuclear war, which, with its potential for total annihilation, threatens to eliminate its own potential witnesses in ways that echo Felman and Laub's theory.[4] Consequently, the threat of nuclear war presents its own crisis of history, and thus, of representation[5] that comes to the fore in *London Fields*.

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[3] By "outsider witnesses" Laub means the friends and neighbours who could have borne witness to the truth of the event; however, the extreme difficulty of positioning oneself sufficiently outside of the "contaminating power" of the event so as to remain a "fully lucid, unaffected witness" contributes to Laub's view of the Holocaust as fundamentally without a witness (1992, p. 81).

[4] *Cf.* R. Howard Bloch, "Fin de Siècle Nuclear Sublime," in which the author calls the prospect of total nuclear war "an unredeemed end without a witness" (2000, p. 73).

[5] In "Techno-Euphoria and the Discourse of the American Sublime," Rob Wilson calls the development of the atom bomb a "history-shattering event" (1992, p. 208). Similarly, in "A Terrible Beauty: the Nuclear Sublime in Philip Ridley's *The Reflecting Skin* (1991)," Deborah Lovatt describes the "alarming discrepancy between the power of the Bomb and the descriptive powers of language" as felt by the first witnesses to the detonation of an atomic bomb (2002, p. 135). Witnesses "reported nuclear explosions in terms of a crisis of the imagination, of speechlessness" (p. 135). The crisis of representation produced by the nuclear bomb and its relationship to the Gothic sublime will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

In addition to its vast scope of devastation, which threatens to eliminate all witnesses, the "fabulously textual" nature of nuclear war, which Jacques Derrida provocatively argues is primarily discursive rather than physical, further complicates attempts at its straightforward representation. Writing in 1984, Derrida claims that

> [n]uclear weaponry depends, more than any weaponry in the past, it seems, upon structures of information and communication, structures of language, including non-vocalizable language, structures of codes and graphic decoding. But the phenomenon is *fabulously textual* also to the extent that, for the moment, a nuclear war has not taken place: one can only talk and write about it. (Derrida 1984, p. 23, emphasis added)

As Daniel Cordle argues, nuclear weaponry, for Derrida, makes up part of the diverse phenomena that, from a post-structuralist perspective, lend themselves to the same sorts of readings more commonly given to literary texts. Cordle points out that despite the potential for Derrida's remarks to be viewed as incendiary, it is nevertheless worth investigating the ways in which nuclear weapons might be considered textual in nature:

> [Nuclear weapons] are textual to the extent that global nuclear war is itself an entirely virtual construction that is accessible *only* through fictions of various kinds. Once it happens then the possibility of a fiction or art with which it must be rendered accurately is itself erased because such a nuclear war has been presumed, from as early as the 1950s, to be world-, or at least civilization-, ending. Fictions seeking to represent this occurrence are caught in a bind because they have to postulate a perspective on the end of culture, from within culture. (2006, p. 1188)

Cordle's argument again echoes Felman and Laub's characterization of the Holocaust as an event without a witness, as well as another part of Felman and Laub's argument: that such an event gives rise to "a radical crisis of the literary text," which must bear witness "to the crisis—and to the critical dimensions—of a history that nonetheless remains, as such, at once unspeakable and inarticulatable" (1992, p. xviii). Most importantly, the crisis of representation resulting from the impossibility of postulating a perspective on the end of culture from within culture positions nuclear warfare as an example of "a history that can no longer be accounted for, and formulated, in its own terms" (p. xviii). As such, modes of representation of nuclear warfare on a global scale and its related traumatic

tensions must be found that both meet this "challenge [to] the capacity of the mind to imagine its own non-existence" (Cordle 2006, p. 1188) and move toward responding to it.

Of course, nuclear anxiety is not limited merely to the existence of nuclear missiles per se. As Amis (1987) argues in the opening essay to his collection of nuclear-themed short stories entitled *Einstein's Monsters* (published just two years before *London Fields*), the state of anticipation of nuclear war gives rise to a climate of nuclear anxiety that is its own trauma. Amis describes having been "born in a state of acute shock" on 25 August 1949, four days before the successful testing of the first Russian atom bomb (1987, p. 1). For Amis, the threat of global nuclear warfare gives rise to a state of suspense that is "ruining everything" (p. 22): even the Western notion of linear history. Since nuclear war is "seven minutes away, and could be over in an afternoon" (p. 2), past and future are "equally threatened, equally cheapened," leaving us only to wait "huddled in the present" as "the planet lives from day to day" (p. 22).

The atom bombs of World War II are arguably only the starting point for a mounting level of nuclear anxiety that is worsened by the threat of their use once again during the Cold War; by knowledge of military nuclear accidents as well as the dangers of nuclear power revealed by the accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl; and by environmental concerns over the toxicity of nuclear waste. Amis acknowledges the sheer power of nuclear weaponry as a contaminating presence, writing that "[i]n every conceivable sense (and then, synergistically, in more senses than that) nuclear weapons make you sick. What toxicity, what power, what range" (p. 3). Contamination is indeed both a physical reality of nuclear power—Amis describes the evidence that "strongly suggests that nuclear weapons, in their inert state, are responsible for a variety of cancers and leukemias" (p. 28)—and an apt metaphor for one's experience of them. As Amis writes, "[i]f you think about nuclear weapons, you feel sick. If you don't think about them, you feel sick without knowing why" (p. 22). Such is the atmosphere over which the "Crisis" (1989, p. 64) of *London Fields* looms—a world in which nuclear anxiety is felt "as a background, a background which then insidiously foregrounds itself" (1987, p. 23).

The nuclear anxiety outlined by Amis in *Einstein's Monsters* is felt in *London Fields* at every turn, hanging over the novel's concern with the end of history and the destruction of nature. Abnormal weather patterns appearing to be the result of environmental contamination metaphorically convey the contaminating presence of the nuclear. The sky is marred with

dead clouds, cyclones, ball lightning, and "scalding heatmist," and while Keith passes off these strange atmospheric occurrences as "El Nino, innit," Samson notes how such remarks carry "little conviction" (1989, p. 103). Samson directly links this strange weather with the apocalypse—the sky speaks "of Revelation" (p. 30)—and to the nuclear. "Sometimes," he muses, "I wonder whether I can keep the world situation out of the novel: the crisis, now sometimes called the Crisis (they can't be *serious*). Maybe it's like the weather. Maybe you can't keep it out" (p. 64). The nuclear also hangs over Samson's concerns with the end of time. Comparing the temporal decay of the inhabitants of London with the decay of the planet, Samson remarks that "[r]eally the thing about life here was its incredible rapidity, with people growing up and getting old in the space of a single week. Like the planet in the twentieth century, with its fantastic *coup de vieux*" (p. 36). He describes Keith as "like the planet," "getting older at a peculiar rate" (p. 111).

Such is the atmosphere of toxic anxiety over which the Crisis looms. Little is known about the Crisis except that, like nuclear cataclysm, it threatens to bring the end of life as the characters know it. Traces of the nuclear haunt the most banal of the everyday situations Samson describes: the beers he offers Keith while entertaining him in Mark Asprey's apartment, which he is renting, are heaped in the refrigerator "like bombs on their racks" (p. 13). When Keith is hired to repair his elderly neighbour Lady Barnaby's boiler, he describes the appliance in nuclear terms, and how nervous he feels "being in the same room—or on the same floor—as this labouring gravity-bomb in its padded vest" (p. 53). In a scene where Samson and Keith share a meal at a stand-up snack counter, Keith orders a chili rilienos that Samson refers to as "a plate of devilled plutonium" and describes as "bubbl[ing] audibly, and [giving] off thick plumes of ebony and silver" (p. 181). Even Keith's darts hobby, ultimate pastime and distraction from the state of the world, is conveyed in nuclear terms, with a dropped dart becoming "a little missile of plastic and tungsten" that "combine[s] with gravity and efficiently plunge[s] towards the centre of the earth" (pp. 36–37). Indeed, much as nuclear anxiety is felt, as Amis suggests, as an insidious, encroaching presence, Samson's anticipation of this apocalyptic event overshadows his entire narrative.

Amis registers turn-of-the-century anxiety elsewhere in his writing in ways that forge clear links to the Gothic. In a 10 September 2006 article for *The Guardian*, Amis argues that we are living not in an age of terrorism, but of "horrorism." This age, Amis argues, is marked by acts of terror like

9/11—attacks of "maximum malevolence" in which "[t]he suicide-mass murderer asks his prospective victims to contemplate their fellow human being with a completely new order of execration" (2006). Such acts of contemporary violence are destructive not only to the bodies of their victims, Amis suggests, but also to the language that would ordinarily be used to describe them, demanding neologisms of the kind he employs to capture their abhorrence. Interestingly, Amis's coinage is echoed by Adriana Cavarero in 2009. She writes that "[a]s violence spreads and assumes unheard-of forms, it becomes difficult to name in contemporary language" (2009, p. 2). Certain acts of extreme violence, Cavarero argues, are of "one particularly atrocious kind," which belong "in the category of horrorism" (p. 29). Her use of the word, "apart from the obvious assonance with the word 'terrorism,' is meant to emphasize the peculiarly repugnant character of so many scenes of contemporary violence, which locates them in the realm of horror rather than that of terror" (p. 29). Cavarero's study encompasses a wide range of acts, including suicide bombings, the beheading of hostages, and the extermination of Jews in the Holocaust, though all are linked by their reaching well beyond the killing of individual victims, penetrating "to the very roots of the human condition, which suffers offense at the ontological level" (p. 32). Though Cavarero does not explicitly discuss the totality of global nuclear warfare, it too belongs in this category of ontological crimes. While both Amis and Cavarero distinguish between terror and horror, their aim is not to split semantic hairs, but rather to move beyond the politicized rhetoric of terror-*ism* in order to capture the sheer excess with which these acts of contemporary violence confront—and horrify—witnesses. In this way, both Amis's and Cavarero's studies ground the horror experienced as a result of living under the looming threat of nuclear cataclysm within the language of the Gothic.

London Fields draws on the Gothic to convey the way in which the threat of nuclear war, by virtue of its sheer destructive scale and the strangeness of its discursive properties, lies in excess of the contemporary witness's frame of reference. Such excess follows the conventions of the Gothic sublime, which refers to the feelings evoked by "vastness, difficulty, power, darkness, vacuity, obscurity, silence, solitude, infinity, massive solidity, and magnificence" (Bomarito 2006, p. 107). That "excit[ing] the ideas of pain, and danger" could be "productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (Burke 2008, p. 33) is key to the development of the Gothic movement, which arose, at least in part, as a response to

sociopolitical anxieties.[6] For a reading public, living through the political, social, and theological upheavals of eighteenth-century Europe, a mode of writing was needed that could depict the "fears about what might happen, what could go wrong, and what could be lost by continuing along the path of political, social, and theological change" (Bomarito 2006, p. 1). Burke's theory of the sublime helped legitimize the Gothic as a way of aestheticizing and grappling both with the fears that existed "in the old social and political order—the evils of an unequal, intolerant society" (Bomarito 2006, p. 1), and with new fears arising out of the prospect of change.

One of these fears involved imagining the end of human history as a result of this prospect of change. In *Apocalyptic Discourse in Contemporary Culture*, Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik (2014) suggest that imagining the end of human history "has its roots…in the eighteenth century, when developments in scientific thought changed perceptions of the relationship between humanity and both the planet and the cosmos" (p. 57). The Gothic has been implicated in representing the "fears of what monstrosity or cataclysm that science might unleash" (p. 59) since its inception, prompting Horner and Zlosnik to argue that there is "a close relationship between this change and the emergence of the concept of the sublime and its manifestation in the Gothic. The apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic texts that have appeared with increasing frequency since the late eighteenth century offer their readers the sublime experience of contemplating the end of time on a human scale" (p. 57). The sublime, then, developed "alongside the rise of science, which revealed the small scale of human existence," while the Gothic in general "allowed a dark reading of both history and the present moment, emphasizing the human tendency to the irrational and pitting horror and the uncanny against the Western optimistic Enlightenment narrative of progress through science, reason, and objectivity" (p. 58). This aspect of the Gothic has applications that persist well into the twentieth century, especially in light of the threat of

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[6] In addition to Jessica Bomarito's and Gilda Williams's perspectives on the Gothic as a response to sociopolitical anxieties, which are discussed in the Introduction, Julia Briggs writes that the Gothic "often includes some element of rebellion against or resistance to existing social forms" (2001, p. 185). Of course, while these claims must be weighed against those of critics like Catherine Spooner, who claim that "our culture's preoccupation with the Gothic cannot be wholly attributed to millennial anxiety" (2006, pp. 21–22), the ubiquity of discussions of sociopolitical anxiety within Gothic criticism points to its importance in giving rise to the genre.

global nuclear war, which has forced humanity to contemplate the possibility of its own extinction in unprecedented ways.

Amis's novel's engagement with the vast threat of nuclear war and its related millennial anxieties can be considered, then, an instance of the Gothic sublime. Deborah Lovatt has already noted how the spectacle of the atom bomb constitutes a sublime experience, noting that "[t]o those who witnessed the first atomic bomb explode at Los Alamos in July 1945, it must have seemed as though the Enlightenment project to uncover (to borrow from Leo Marx) 'the ultimate structural principles of the universe' (Marx 1964, p. 198) had been realized" (Lovatt 2002, p. 135). By aligning the nuclear age with the Enlightenment, Lovatt supports a view of the Gothic as a privileged mode for attending to nuclear anxiety. Drawing on Kant, she theorizes the nuclear as a sublime experience:

> As newspaper articles attest, eye-witnesses veered dizzyingly between fear and wonder at the unprecedented power of atomic explosions, experiencing the attraction-repulsion dynamic of what Kant termed the 'negative pleasure' of the sublime. An 'explosive force such as to stagger the imagination,' the excessive, overwhelming power of the atomic bomb forced observers into a shocking sense of their own insignificance in comparison. (p. 135)

Lovatt's nuclear sublime, in combination with Bomarito's notion of the Gothic as a reaction to sociopolitical anxieties, aligns closely with views Amis has expressed regarding the difficulty in representing, or even contemplating, global nuclear war. Amis describes the mushroom cloud above Hiroshima (in language that echoes Lovatt's) as a "beautiful spectacle, even though it owed its color to a kiloton of human blood" (1987, p. 5). He goes on to contemplate the psychological effects of nuclear weapons, to which he grants nearly as much importance as their physical power:

> As yet undetonated, the world's arsenals are already waging psychological warfare; deterrence itself, for instance, is entirely psychological (and, for that reason, entirely inexact). The airbursts, the redemptive strikes, the massive retaliations, the uncontrollable escalations: it is already happening inside our heads … Nuclear weapons repel all thought, perhaps because they can end all thought. (p. 22)

The notion of nuclear apocalypse as an "unthinkable" event (p. 10) grounds Amis's treatment of the threat of global nuclear war within the

tradition of the Gothic sublime, which, as a mode concerned with that which exceeds contemplation, becomes the vehicle for his investigation into the vicissitudes of bearing witness to such an event.

Within *London Fields*, the psychological impact of the aporia at the heart of bearing witness to nuclear war imprints itself on the form of Samson's narrative through the recurring motif of black holes and event horizons, which function as Gothic spaces. These spaces stand in metaphorically for the attraction-repulsion characteristic of the sublime experience of bearing witness to the atomic bomb as well as present a structural reflection of Samson's shattered psyche. As Manuel Aguirre suggests, the threshold is vital to the construction of Gothic fiction: it leads beyond the realm of everyday experience, but the threshold itself conveys the Otherness of the space that lies beyond it even before the threshold is crossed, making it a liminal space in and of itself. The threshold is "part of the other," and is thus, borrowing a mathematical term, 'anisotropic' (displaying greater complexity the more it is magnified) (Aguirre 2008, p. 5). For Aguirre, such spaces highlight the instability inherent in natural, psychic, and cultural systems, with the liminalization of ordinary space "depriv[ing] it of solidity, making it less (or more) than real, placing it in between brackets, as it were. Hence both its numinosity and its terror" (p. 14). In *London Fields*, the image of the black hole as a Gothic space that constitutes mystery at the heart of the rationalist world renders it a powerful symbol of the total destruction, and hence, aporia, that underlies any discussion of nuclear armament: discussions which, like these numinous spaces, "destabilize assumptions as to the physical, ontological, or moral order of the cosmos" (Aguirre 2008, p. 6).

Black holes are present in *London Fields* at every turn, with Nicola, for example, describing herself as such:

> With her, light went the other way … The black hole, so long predicted in theory, was now, to Nicola's glee, established astronomical fact: Cygnus X-1. It was a binary system; the black hole was orbiting a star 30 times the mass of our sun. The black hole weighed in at ten solar masses, but was no wider than London. It was nothing; it was just a hole; it had dropped out of space and time; it had collapsed into its own universe. Its very nature prevented anyone from knowing what it was: unapproachable, unilluminable. Nothing is fast enough to escape from it … *That's what I am*, she used to whisper to herself after sex. *A black hole. Nothing can escape from me*. (Amis 1989, p. 67)

The black hole is the metaphor to which Nicola most often returns in asserting her own agency with regards to her role as "Murderee" (p. 15). In addition to self-consciously referencing her own abject status as a victim of male violence and sexual exploitation,[7] by aligning herself with the "unapproachable" and the "unilluminable," she challenges the voyeuristic gaze of those who consume representations of trauma. Additionally, the language used to describe Cygnus X-1—that "its very nature prevented anyone from knowing what it was"—aligns the black hole both with the aporia at the heart of imagining global nuclear war and with the aporetic nature of traumatic memory in general, which remains fundamentally inaccessible to victims.

This symbolic function is supported by Guy's meditation, while on his way to visit Nicola, on the ongoing Proxy War, an event toward which he (despite, or perhaps due to, the privileges he occupies as a man of aristocratic lineage) feels like "a pale spectator among tens of thousands, high up in the bleachers" (Amis 1989, p. 141).[8] Guy characterizes the war as an event resisting narration, since, when a policy is developed of "killing all journalists," the result is a distortion of information likened to a black hole's effect on matter: "What came out came out slowly or wrongly or weakly, like tired light" (p. 142). Samson goes so far as to call the scale of the war "astronomical. Because if millions were circling in the vortex of war, then other millions needed to know whether they were living or dead, and if there were millions who cared for the millions who cared, then pretty soon … pretty soon … " (p. 142, original ellipses). What begins as an assertion of distance between viewer and viewed ends with the realization—only partially articulated before petering out in ellipses—that the viewer is already implicated. That Guy's musings lead him to feel "lost

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[7] Elizabeth Russell (2014) points out that in apocalyptic narratives, "representation of the female body in terms of abjection and disgust is a common theme" (p. 108), and here the black hole image calls up "[w]ords such as *drain, vermin, dirty, contaminating, leaking*," which, according to Russell, all stick together to name women in this discourse" (Russell 2014, p. 113). Such narratives put forth "associations between domestic violence and state violence" (Russell 2014, p. 109), which, as we will see, appear frequently in Nicola's narrative arc.

[8] A common theme in each novel discussed here is the tension between witnessing and spectatorship. The moral qualms raised by the act of witnessing become especially pertinent in Chap. 3's discussion of Margaret Drabble's *The Gates of Ivory*, in which well-to-do London psychiatrist Liz Headland is forced to confront her ethical obligation to victims of the Cambodian genocide, an event in which she, as an individual on the winning side of British imperialism, is at least indirectly implicated.

… in his new mood of exalted melancholy" (p. 143) as he climbs the steps to Nicola's door attests to the negative pleasure of the sublime wrought by the sheer scale of the events Guy imagines, which cannot be fully captured. The threshold or event horizon around the aporia of trauma is shaky, implicating all who attempt to maintain a comfortable spectatorial distance.

Contributing to the sense of aporia at the heart of *London Fields* is the novel's deliberate lack of clarity, which blurs the boundary between sign and referent by making readers unsure of whether the events Samson narrates are actually unfolding. For example, Samson tells readers of a trip he apparently made to New York to meet with his publisher, Missy Harder, only to suggest a few pages later that he has dreamt the entire trip: "All I did was dream her. I woke up and I was still in Heathrow Airport, with my cheek on the hot vinyl" (Amis 1989, p. 263). The aporetic nature of the event is highlighted visually by the blank page that occupies the space where Samson's retelling of his time in America should be. Samson's dreams again constitute the threshold of a numinous world that threatens the validity of Samson's memory, acting as a sort of narrative wormhole to an alternate reality, of which readers are unsure until Samson questions the reliability of his memories later on. These dream spaces make the narrative bigger within than without, conforming to Aguirre's model of Gothic space that calls the rational world into question. In so doing, they also mimic the experience of a trauma that is available to its victims only indirectly. Samson's later revelation that certain events he has recounted are actually dreams breaks the reader's frame of reference, transmitting something of trauma's damaging psychic impact to readers themselves. Additionally, both Samson and Nicola are keenly aware of how their own narrative rushes them toward annihilation as toward a black hole, such that the novel is experienced by characters and readers as, in effect, eliminating its own witnesses. Here, once again, the novel performs an act of transmission, this time reproducing in readers something of Caruth's notion of the unlocalizability of trauma.

Samson and Nicola's self-reflexive awareness of the way the narrative rushes toward a fundamentally unknowable future speaks to the aporetic nature of bearing witness to trauma. Displaying anxiety over nuclear technologies that arguably (and ironically) represent the apex of enlightenment rationalism, the novel conforms to Fred Botting's theorization of the appearance of black holes in contemporary Gothic cultural productions (specifically film), linking the image of the void to the Gothic tradition as well as to several characteristics of postmodernism.

First, he distinguishes between the traditional and the postmodern Gothic, arguing that while the Gothic began as an expression of "the dark underside of modernity, Gothic horror now outlines the darkness of the postmodern condition" (2006, p. 281):

> In cultural terms, such a powerful consuming void forms the ultimate figure: postmodernism's impending collapse of all laws and distinctions. The light of enlightened modernity no longer has the speed to overcome the dead weight of its own history or advance in glorious progress. It is pulled back to the black hole of its uncertain, postmodern present and recycles Gothic images in an attempt to give form to anxiety and horror. (p. 296)

While the apparent void Botting identifies at the heart of postmodern culture is somewhat vaguely defined, *London Fields* nonetheless offers a very specific vision of the vey postmodern narrative crisis that results from the impossible task, in bearing witness to nuclear war, of imagining oneself out of existence: a task which Amis considers to be crucial to any attempt at writing the nuclear.

According to Amis, the anxiety generated by our recognition of the possibility of nuclear war infects every aspect of our lives—physical, emotional, and intellectual:

[t]he unthinkable is unthinkable; the unthinkable is not thinkable, not by human beings, because the eventuality it posits is one in which all human contexts would have already vanished. SDI [the Strategic Defense Initiative] can never be tested, and neither can the actors. How they would respond at such a time is anyone's guess. But they would no longer be human beings. In a sense, nobody would be. That status does not exist on the other side of the firebreak (1987, p. 10).

Considering the paradoxical nature of this task, Amis asserts that "[i]n the discursive sphere there are several ways of writing badly about nuclear weapons" (p. 5). Many writers, it seems to Amis, "do not see the way nuclear weapons put everything into italic capitals" (p. 5). Failing to "get the point about nuclear weapons" is identified by Amis as "the basis of our difficulty" (p. 5). A literature of the nuclear must grapple with the fact that language "cannot live with this reality": the reality of the end of culture, witnessed, somehow, from within culture (p. 19). The postmodern Gothic, Botting argues, "closes in the shadow of the black hole, unable to see beyond the event horizon. Though it pulls away from the void, there is, it seems, nowhere else to go but back again. It does not have the escape

velocity to conjure up an idea of transcendence or an imaginable and inhabitable future" (2006, pp. 297–98). While Botting writes of the postmodern Gothic in general, his words apply directly to Samson's narrative, which, though obsessively fixated on what its afterlife may be, is unable to offer the reader more than the slight hope, conveyed in an addendum addressed to Keith's infant daughter Kim, of a future: "Children survive their parents. Works of art survive their makers. I failed, in art and love. Nevertheless, I ask you to survive me" (Amis 1989, p. 469).

Samson, as protagonist-author of *London Fields*, is charged with the paradoxical task of narrating what resists representation. The task of bearing witness from a position within culture both to the collective trauma of nuclear annihilation and to the personal trauma he has suffered at London Fields (both of which stem from an event that could potentially demolish all cultural contexts), leaves its damaging imprint on Samson and his narration, which is marked by gaps, digressions, and dramatic shifts that suggest "that traumatic knowledge cannot be fully communicated or retrieved without distortion" (Whitehead 2004, p. 84). The instability of Samson's testimony destabilizes his narrative in a way that reflects his considerable anxiety as he attempts the seemingly impossible task of writing a story that will matter to no one, "since at any moment, nothing might matter" (Amis 1989, p. 254).

Yolanda Gampel's theory of the uncanny in social violence provides added insights into Samson's fractured mental state, further linking the work *London Fields* performs as trauma text to the Gothic tradition. Recalling Gampel's expanded theory of the uncanny as "frightening experiences that cannot be expressed in words" (2000, p. 49) can help explain why for Samson, nuclear war belongs to a class of experiences that are inexpressible, as indicated by his self-doubt as a writer and consequent recourse to self-reflexivity and paradox, his loss of authority over his own narrative, and his dramatic shifts in tone. The crisis of representation that links global nuclear warfare and the Holocaust places global nuclear warfare within what is, for Gampel, a class of primary repeated experiences of the twentieth century. Samson's frustration at the insincere facial expressions he attempts to describe, as well as his fixation on the nuclear referent which infiltrates his narration of everyday events, points to the shadow of nuclear war as that which is hidden and dangerous within the familiar. The uncanny provides a framework for understanding the effect of grappling with nuclear anxiety on Samson's psyche as well as for the normalizing rhetoric surrounding nuclear war, including the acronyms

and euphemisms—"BAMBI, SAINTS, PALS, and AWDREY (Atomic Weapons Detection, Recognition, and Estimation of Yield), 'the Jedi concept' (near-lightspeed plasma weapons), 'Star Wars' itself"—meant to render the concept of nuclear war innocuous. Such rhetoric, Amis argues, "takes you out onto the sports field—or back to the nursery" (1987, p. 6).

As Samson is "thrust into a fragmented, violent social context … without any continuity and which transmits extremely paradoxical messages" (Gampel 2000, p. 55), experiencing the sudden eruption of the unfamiliar and ineffable within the everyday, his feeling of uncanniness is overwhelming. On a formal level, the fragmented, violent social context Samson is living in insinuates itself in the jumble of forms—such as Nicola's diaries (Amis 1989, p. 22, 205), fragments of autobiography written under Mark Asprey's pen-name Marius Appleby (pp. 324–25), self-consciously fictionalized accounts of life in the Black Cross Pub (pp. 217–18), and slices of ostensibly real-life meditations on the difficulties of authorship (p. 26)—that interrupt the continuity of Samson's narrative. The novel's jumbled form exemplifies Gampel's uncanny: the eruptions of the unfamiliar at the heart of the everyday that convey both the ineffability of bearing witness to a traumatic memory that is not immediately accessible and the paradox of imagining oneself out of existence.

As Gampel points out, the traumatic impact of sociopolitical crisis is different from the experience of general anxiety, and Samson's experience of the threat of nuclear war is similar to the example of terrorism that Gampel uses to illustrate her point: amidst the total ambiguity of such sociopolitical crises, "the ego feels threatened by a very different form of destruction than that caused by, say, anxiety. Whereas anxiety evinces a state of alertness, terror brings the ego to the verge of shattering" (2000, p. 51). Samson's reactions to the strange weather exemplify the fragility of his ego, linking his fractured mental state to the nuclear: though "frequently very beautiful," the weather seems to bring him "close to hysteria, as indeed does everything now" (Amis 1989, p. 14). This sentiment encapsulates Samson's burden of testifying to that which completely overwhelms his frame of reference. His inability to distinguish dreams from reality, already representative of the instability of traumatic memory in general, marks Samson as the embodiment of the traumatized subject.

The general air of unreliability that hangs over Samson's authorship reveals how nuclear anxiety overwhelms his frame of reference. Much of Samson's inspiration comes from the personal diaries Nicola plants in a garbage can for him to find, though occasionally it is Nicola, more than

Samson, who appears to be controlling the narrative. Samson's inquiries after the progress of Nicola's romantic rendezvous with Guy, whom she is swindling out of a large sum of money, reveal a complete ceding of his authorial power: when he inquires, "Has Guy been here yet?" Nicola responds, "No. Soon. It's the next but one thing. I'm going to speed things up. Massive escalation[,]" to which the ineffectual Samson responds, "Do you really need Guy? Couldn't you just edit him out?" (p. 119). In this short interchange, which does not explicitly indicate who says what, it is easy to overlook that it is in fact not Samson but Nicola who makes the authorial decision of how soon to escalate the drama of her illicit relationship with Guy, leaving Samson, who is in a rush to "get on with [his] little piece of harmless escapism" before the Crisis hits and renders all cultural productions meaningless, able only to inquire haplessly as to whether Guy is really necessary to the advancement of the plot (p. 64). This ceding of authorial control violates readers' trust in Samson's authority as narrator, undermining their sense of control over the events being recounted, and thus mimicking the forms and symptoms of trauma, reproducing in readers something of Samson's shattered psyche. For Samson, the act of writing is a burden of testimony he must carry despite his difficulty in putting his narrative into words. His jumbled narrative and loss of authority over the events he recounts show his inability to distinguish the real from the imagined, embodying the voice of the traumatized witness with whom, according to Felman and Laub, readers/listeners must "learn how to bond" in a "common struggle to release the testimony which, in spite of inhibitions on both sides, will allow the telling of the trauma to proceed and to reach its testimonial resolution" (1992, p. xvii)—in this case, the prospect of nuclear apocalypse threatening to render his testimony, along with everything else, meaningless. Gampel's theory of the uncanny renders Samson not only a traumatized subject but also a Gothic one.[9]

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[9] Hogle argues that the Gothic provides "the best examples of Freud's uncanny" by way of the "ghosts, spectres, or monsters" that arise "often to manifest unresolved … conflicts that can no longer be successfully buried from view" (2002, p. 2). Since both the uncanny and traumatic experience are characterized by the sudden return of the repressed (revealing danger at the heart of what was once thought to be safe), the uncanny is often applied as a metaphor for traumatic memory: Anne Whitehead writes, for example, that "Freud's work on the uncanny reveals that even apparently innocuous daily objects and incidents can be drawn into an atmosphere of trauma" (2004, p. 86). The links between the Gothic, the uncanny, and traumatic memory will reappear throughout this study, most notably in Chap. 4's discussion

In addition to his writer's block, symbolic of trauma's fundamental resistance to narration, Samson also suffers from an unnamed terminal medical condition akin to radiation poisoning, which points to the way his body bears witness to the trauma he has endured. Caruth's model of trauma draws on Freud's notion of consciousness as that which protects the body from becoming overwhelmed by external stimuli, theorizing consciousness as being, like the body, a kind of barrier. "Unlike the body, however," Caruth suggests, "the barrier of consciousness is a barrier of sensation and knowledge that protects the organism by placing stimulation within an ordered experience of time. What causes trauma, then, is a shock that appears to work very much like a bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind's experience of time" (1996, p. 61). Caruth references psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk, whose work focuses on observable neurobiological changes that occur within the brains of trauma victims and impede memory consolidation, to support her claims.[10] Traumatic memory is experienced as a foreign and unassimilable body lodged in the victim's consciousness.

Caruth thus forges a connection between body and consciousness as barriers which, in effect, become pierced by trauma—both figuratively, as imagined by Freud, and literally, as supported by the neurobiological changes identified by van der Kolk. This connection allows Caruth, for example, to interpret the faithfulness of "Her," the protagonist of *Hiroshima, mon amour*, to her dead German lover, along with her subsequent refusal to see and understand his death, through the image of Her's "body's fragmentation" (p. 31).[11] This fragmentation is the result, according to Caruth, of an "unbridgeable abyss" between the "when" of seeing her lover die and the "when" of his actual death: this "missing of the 'when' within the shock of sight" is "experienced as a confusion of the body; for in missing the moment of his death, the woman is also unable to

of "uncanny memory" in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, Chap. 5's discussion of Peter Wingrave as uncanny doppelgänger in Pat Barker's *Double Vision*, and Chap. 6's discussion of the Hailsham clones as uncanny Others in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*.

[10] Interestingly, van der Kolk invokes black holes as a metaphor in his own work, calling the positive feedback loop between traumatic memory and stress hormones "'the Black Hole' in the mental life of the PTSD patient, that attracts all associations to it, and saps current life of its significance" (1999, p. 315).

[11] *Hiroshima, mon amour* is a film that indirectly retells the story of the Hiroshima nuclear bombing, using the event as a backdrop to the love story that it develops between its two protagonists, referred to only as "Her" and "Him." Caruth argues that the film treats as its subject the difficulties of communicating trauma and the connections that can occur between individuals across these difficulties.

recognize the continuation of her life … Her bodily life, that is, has become the endless attempt to witness her lover's death" (p. 39). Caruth thus demonstrates the ways in which the body can bear witness to aspects of trauma that cannot be narrativized. Similarly, the parallel between Samson's writer's block and his apparent radiation sickness links global nuclear war to the crisis of imagination and of representation of a history that is "at once unspeakable and inarticulatable—a history that can no longer be accounted for, and formulated, in its own terms" (Felman and Laub 1992, p. xviii).

Samson often renders his feelings of embodied trauma in the language of the Gothic. That he feels "dead already" (Amis 1989, p. 323) is a common refrain: recalling his six-night hallucinatory stay at Heathrow airport, he describes "becoming, as the weeks unfolded, a kind of joke figure in the Departure Lounge. Then a tragic figure. Then a ghoulish one, staggering from news hatch to cafeteria with bits falling off me" (p. 280). Here Samson's disintegrating body becomes a testament to his nuclear anxiety in a way that language alone cannot. His physical demise proceeds alongside the telling of his story, so that his death, which comes in the form of what is suggested to be a cyanide pill, coincides with the end of the novel. This link between the progression of Samson's illness and the unfolding of his story characterizes the act of testimony as a burden that is physically killing him. Like the body of the female protagonist of *Hiroshima, mon amour*, which Caruth argues can become "the faithful monument to a death" only when "utterly deprived of sight and understanding" and "as a fragment" (1996, p. 31), Samson's body becomes a monument to nuclear anxiety through its physical disintegration, enacting an endless attempt to bear witness to a trauma that "can only be possessed within a history larger than any single individual or any single generation" (p. 71). Such imagery casts Samson in the role of a walking corpse, epitomizing the Freudian uncanny and again evoking the ineffable erupting within the everyday that Gampel identifies as being latent within twentieth-century experiences of social violence. Samson thus embodies Steven Bruhm's notion of "contemporary Gothic subject [as] … psychoanalytic subject (and *vice versa*)" (2002, p. 262).

Nicola, too, carries in her body traumas she cannot process, and as with Samson, the Gothic provides a useful framework for understanding their damaging psychic impact. Nicola exhibits a split subjectivity, adopting various guises, or embodying, in Freudian terms, numerous doppelgängers. Dimitris Vardoulakis notes that doppelgängers reflect a subjectivity that

"is defective, disjunct, split, threatening, spectral…. [T]he Doppelgänger has been commonly viewed as an aberration, the stencil of a symptomatology of the self" (2006, p. 100). Freud emphasizes that doppelgängers are uncanny in that they represent mystery at the heart of the familiar, emphasizing "the extraordinarily strong feeling of something uncanny that pervades [its] conception," as well as "the impulse towards self-protection which has caused the ego to project such a content outward as something foreign to itself" (1995, p. 10). Though Samson's narration renders Nicola's split subjectivities as tools to seduce and manipulate men, casting her in the role of fatal woman or *femme fatale* (despite her objection to his use of the term), these split subjectivities in fact serve a more complex psychological function that is directly related to her position as witness to nuclear anxiety. Nicola's body, like Samson's, is a testament to her trauma, becoming the site upon which her split subjectivities are visually inscribed, as suggested by the emphasis on her clothing. Samson describes her as having formerly worked as "[a]n actress—she had gone quite far with that," and notes that she still possesses "a trunk full of outfits and some videotapes (poor little rich girl, spry newlywed, naked houri maddeningly glimpsed through fogsmoke and veils)" (Amis 1989, p. 19).

This clash of subjectivities is thus given physical expression, with Nicola's body as blank canvas upon which these subjectivities are performed. Additionally, Nicola's body, like Samson's, is fragmented, as seen when Samson places a great deal of emphasis on Nicola's kisses as a tool for seducing Guy Clinch out of his life savings: Samson conflates her kisses with a series of archetypal figures of male desire (and targets for misogyny), including "the Rosebud, the Pouter, Youth, Cousins Touching Tongues, the Deliquescent Virgin, the Needer … Anybody's, the Toothcount, Lady Macbeth, the Grand-A-Night Hooker, [and] the Readied Pussy" (p. 291). This objectification of Nicola's sexuality is its own form of violence, which adds a further layer of complication to the novel's attempt to adequately represent its myriad forms of trauma by interfering with reader empathy for Samson as author.[12] And, like Samson's, Nicola's condition is terminal, since she is aware of (has, in fact, orchestrated) the date of her own murder. Nicola's testimony, then, like

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[12] This is the first of many challenges to the notion of trauma fiction as an inherently ethical mode of writing, and will reappear in *The Gates of Ivory* by way of novelist Stephen Cox's Orientalist portrayal of Thai beauty queen Miss Porntip (*cf.* Chap. 3).

Samson's, is linked to a process of physical decay that itself bears witness to an anxiety that language alone fails to capture.

Though Nicola's performance of her various roles is done in part to manipulate a culture that insists on the sexual objectification of women, her split subjectivity and its link to nuclear anxiety cannot be denied, and constitutes a further example of Gampel's uncanny in social violence. Nicola's foreknowledge of her own death coincides with premonitory visions that hint at the future Crisis: "On television at the age of four she saw the warnings, and the circles of concentric devastation, with London like a bull's eye in the centre of the board. She knew what would happen then … It was just a matter of time" (p. 16). As a child, she possesses an imaginary friend, Enola Gay, named for the aircraft that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, a figure Samson tells us "came from inside the head of Nicola Six" and who functions as Nicola's ghostly double (p. 16). Indeed, Enola Gay is at the heart of Nicola's plan to swindle Guy Clinch out of his money: Nicola fabricates a story about a friend, a Cambodian woman named En Lah Gai, and her son Little Boy (one of the euphemisms for the atomic bomb), both of whom are in need of financial support.[13] Nicola is often conflated with Enola, both by herself and by others. These moments offer the most convincing evidence of Nicola's split subjectivity as the symptom of the trauma of nuclear anxiety. While kissing Keith, who Nicola believes will be her murderer, Nicola tells herself, "It wouldn't be her who romped and basked with Keith …. It would be Enola, Enola Gay" (p. 204). She dissociates again sometime later: "Then, leaning into his opened face—and already hearing the swill of mouthwash, the twanging floss (it isn't me doing this: it's Enola, Enola Gay)—she gave him the Jewish Princess" (p. 269).

Guy, too, describes Nicola in a passage that both characterizes her body as fragmented and confuses it with that of Enola: "Guy thought of Nicola Six and the continuous and inexplicable waves of suffering which the planet had somehow arranged for her—the lips, the eyes, averted in their

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[13] That En Lah Gai is Cambodian seems a deliberate allusion to the Cambodian genocide (1975–79), and is a further point of connection between Amis's novel and Drabble's. Nicola's decision to exploit this fictional identity for her own gain connects thematically with the exploitation of another narrative of Eastern female victimhood, this time in the context of Margaret Drabble's *The Gates of Ivory*: that of Mme Savet Akrun, whose image is used both to benefit charity advertising campaigns and to enhance the reputation of photographers alike. Again, representation enacts its own form of violence that is at odds with trauma theory's ethical project.

pain. He blinked, and imagined he could see a dark-braided girl playing alone beneath the curtain of the willow tree. Perhaps it was Enola, perhaps it was Enola Gay. Enola, searching for Little Boy" (p. 95). Guy's juxtaposition of the image of Nicola (which has been reduced to averted lips and eyes) and that of Enola links both Nicola's split subjectivity and fragmented body with the same nuclear anxiety felt by Samson. Indeed, the conflation with her alter-ego Enola makes Nicola into a doppelgänger of the bomb itself as an object of fear and desire (embodying the nuclear sublime). And yet she is also a victim whose psyche has been invaded by external trauma, which Gampel fittingly describes through the metaphor of "radioactive identification": "This 'radioactive identification' or 'radioactive nucleus' … comprises non-representable remnants of the radioactive influence which cannot be spoken about or described in words but instead reveal themselves through images, nightmares, and symptoms" (2000, p. 59). This "radioactivity" is in turn transmitted to future generations in a process labelled "transgenerational indigestible trauma" (p. 59), once again characterizing it as a collective trauma that cannot be possessed by any single individual or generation.

For Samson and Nicola, walking in the city, which takes on properties that are by turn haunting and post-apocalyptic, enacts a metaphorical exploration of the horror that they both struggle to articulate. In this sense, Amis's Gothic London follows the pattern of what Agnesszka Klis (2010) calls contemporary urban gothic, which tends to introduce "the main character who represents a 'liminal' figure" and characterize the city as "a space in which the gothic and the familiar dimension remain in the state of fusion, one merging into the other, and secrets/evils/supernatural elements circulate in and out freely (p. 379). In the case of *London Fields*, London is both a familiar space in the sense of Amis's reference to real-life landmarks (including London Fields, a park in Hackney), and a defamiliarized Gothic zone (the London Fields of the novel is a nuclear testing site and the site of Samson's unspeakable past trauma, for example). Klis suggests that if the Gothic subject is necessarily a fragmented subject, then "[t]he contemporary gothic city may be viewed as a space which perfectly reflects liminal characters, functioning both in the gothic and in the familiar dimension of that space" (378). This is indeed the case for Samson, who links the external urban wasteland of Amis's Gothicized London with the inner space of the mind so that by walking in the city he explores a "Gothic psychogeography" (Coverley 2012, p. 81): he is "the fly" trapped within the "spider's web" (Amis 1989, p. 3) of the city, much

as he is held captive by the nuclear anxiety that makes it on to nearly every page. When Guy's sister-in-law Lizzyboo takes a romantic interest in Samson, he asserts that if Lizzyboo "wants to find the way to my heart she's going to need a fucking shovel. She's going to need to dig up London Fields" (p. 136); revisiting the site of the trauma of his childhood, Samson dissolves the boundary between the external setting of London Fields and his inner psychical and emotional life, framing London as metaphorical space which not only allows for explorations of nuclear trauma's psychic impact, but takes on an agency of its own that emphasizes the characters' psychological dislocation and disempowerment as a result of their traumas. This concept has been explored by Ashley Prosser in relation to the writing of Peter Ackroyd, calling Ackroyd's London "something akin to the abhuman monster of the Gothic mode," possessing "an uncanny form of agency, a kind of spectral consciousness through which the city is able to influence its inhabitants" and which "can be seen to enact a powerful and threatening influence over its inhabitants' lives (and deaths)" (Prosser 2014, p. 69, 78). The same may be said for the Amis's London, through which Samson and Nicola must wander in a state of numbness. Samson appears to approach this psychogeographic exploration with resolve:

> We went out walking. We can do this. *Oh*—what you see in London streets at three o'clock in the morning, with it trickling out to the eaves and flues, tousled water, ragged waste. Violence is near and inexhaustible. Even death is near. But none of it can touch Nicola and me. It knows better, and stays right out of our way. It can't touch us. It knows this. We're the dead. (Amis 1989, p. 260)

With London as spatial representation of Samson's traumatized psyche, Samson lays out his approach to, and feeling about, writing trauma. His statement, "We can do this," expresses the difficulty of confronting his traumatic memory, despite his insistence that he and Nicola are immune to the violence and death that is so "near and inexhaustible."

Though he insists that "none of it can touch Nicola and me," the reason he provides for this belief—that they are "the dead"—hints at a much larger psychological impact than Samson is willing to admit. While he attempts to convince readers of the strength of his narrative authority—that he remains untouched by the events he records—he in fact exhibits the emotional numbness characteristic of victims of trauma. He repeats

this excursion in the streets of London some time later, again with Nicola, this time after they have slept together (for artistic purposes only, according to Samson):

> We put our clothes back on and went out walking, in the dripping alleys, the dark chambers of the elaborately suffering city. We're the dead. Amazing that we can do this. More amazing that we want to. Hand in hand and arm in arm we totter, through communal fantasy and sorrow, through London fields. We're the dead. Above, the sky has a pink tinge to it, the cunning opposite of health, like something bad, something high …. We're the dead. (p. 391)

That Samson feels it is "amazing that we can do this," and "[m]ore amazing that we want to," not only refers to his willingness to walk the ghostly streets of London, but also mirrors the act of writing trauma. The pair's faltering steps through the dripping back alleys of the suffering city toward London Fields evoke the inaccessibility of traumatic memory to the victim's psyche and its consequent resistance to narration. As in his first and equally grim outing in the city streets, Samson again characterizes himself and Nicola as "the dead": seemingly constituted or inhabited by the violence that surrounds them, they are, Samson asserts, immune, though this assertion of immunity again carries with it connotations of psychological numbness that arises out of traumatic experience. With haunting echoes of Dickens's Sydney Carton awaiting his fate at the guillotine, Samson writes, "I must go back to London Fields—but of course I'll never do it now. So far away. The time, the time, it never *was* the time. It is a far, far …" (p. 463). Samson's experience of this trauma remains perpetually belated, leaving him doomed to circle around a fundamentally unlocalizable primary event. The apocalyptic London of Amis's novel thus operates within the contemporary Gothic mode by evoking horror not "in the traditional Gothic sense of monstrosity" but rather by identifying "the mind as a decentered site of instability and powerlessness" (Haider 2012, p. 59).

Of course, Samson and Nicola are not as numb as they think they are. Samson takes on the responsibility for Nicola's murder so that another's life might not be ruined. Nicola, unable to bear having Keith or Guy kill her, has Samson do it seemingly because they are connected by their shared narrative and shared experience of trauma. Ending his own life by swallowing what appears to be a cyanide pill at the end of the novel,

Samson effectively renders the story into an event eliminating its own witness. Nicola does the same by, at the last minute, substituting Samson as her murderer for Keith or Guy. Both Samson and Nicola have approached trauma's event horizon and carry the uncanny experience of the ineffable like "indigestible stones" (Gampel 2000, p. 61). As two individuals who have been to the brink of the aporia of traumatic experience, they embody what Felman and Laub call "the bearers of the silence" (1992, p. xix).[14]

Deepening this reading of Samson's characterization of himself and Nicola as walking dead is the way that his representation also aligns the pair with Giorgio Agamben's theorization of the key Holocaust figure of the *Muselmann*, a term used by death-camp inmates during the Holocaust to refer to individuals dying of malnutrition. These figures are repeatedly referred to as walking dead in survivor testimony, which presents the so-called *Muselmann* as one who, having lost the will to live, "no longer had room in his consciousness for the contrasts good or bad, noble or base, intellectual or unintellectual. He was a *staggering corpse*, a bundle of physical functions in its last convulsions" (Améry 1980, p. 9, emphasis added). They are described as "mummy-men" and "living dead" (Carpi 1993, p. 17, qtd in Agamben 2002, p. 54). For Agamben, the *Muselmann* upholds the notion, originally put forth by Hannah Arendt, that "In Auschwitz, people did not die; rather, corpses were produced. Corpses without death, non-humans whose decease is debased into a matter of serial production" (2002, p. 72).

By virtue of their awareness not only of their own deaths (whether, in Samson's case, by apparent radiation poisoning or in Nicola's by murder) but also of potential total nuclear annihilation, Samson and Nicola inhabit, like Agamben's *Muselmann*, "the extreme threshold between life and death" (p. 47). For Agamben, this liminal position renders the figure of the *Muselmann* the quintessential witness to the aporia of the Holocaust (p. 47). He explains:

> In the *Muselmann*, the impossibility of bearing witness is no longer a mere privation. Instead, it has become real; it exists as such. If the survivor bears witness not to the gas chambers or to Auschwitz but to the *Muselmann*, if he speaks only on the basis of an *impossibility of speaking*, then his testimony cannot be denied. Auschwitz—that to which it is not possible to bear witness—is absolutely and irrefutably proven. (p. 164, my emphasis)

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[14] Felman and Laub use this term in relation to survivors of the Holocaust: those charged with the task of bearing witness to the event's unspeakable trauma.

The loss of a will to live on the part of the *Muselmann* is met with rejection by fellow inmates: having "giv[en] up," he is "given up by his comrades" (Améry 1980, p. 9). Carpi points out the disgust on the part of victims in response to the officers making the *Muselmanner* "go down the stairs with us only to show them to us, as if to say, 'you'll become like them'" (1993, p. 17). Though Agamben does not use the term "uncanny" in descriptions of the *Muselmanner*, reactions from fellow inmates clearly follow the Freudian pattern of rejection of the *Muselmann* as uncanny Other, suggesting that "[a]ccording to the law that what man despises is also what he fears resembles him, the *Muselmann* is universally avoided because everyone in the camp recognizes himself in his disfigured face" (2002, p. 52). Forcing fellow inmates to face the dissolution of boundaries between life and death, human and inhuman, the sight of the *Muselmanner* becomes, for Agamben, "unbearable to human eyes" (p. 51). This language aligns the *Muselmann* with the Gothic, and with Samson and Nicola as uncanny subjects. Having encountered the impossibility of seeing and knowing due to the extreme dehumanization they have suffered, the *Muselmanner* can speak to the impossibility of witnessing, "consciously affirming the lacuna in testimony" (p. 41). Like the *Muselmanner*, Samson and Nicola speak to the ineffability (i.e., the uncanniness) in bearing witness to nuclear anxiety as a form of social violence. Samson and Nicola's awareness of their own deaths from the novel's outset and their manipulation of events in order to eliminate witnesses *to* these deaths bring them to a threshold of traumatic experience that, while not as extreme as the example of the *Muselmann*, shares its paradoxical quality of allowing them to bear witness to the aporia at the heart of testimony.

However, with all of the novel's emphasis on witnessing the nuclear as a sublime experience that is marked by the aporetic and the uncanny, one may miss the way in which the Gothic is harnessed not solely as a tool for conveying the ineffable in testimony, but also as a technique of subversion. Richard Davenport-Hines argues that the Gothic "[c]an react to normative conventions" and identifies a resurgence in the Gothic since the 1980s which "rails against … nerves of authority" (1998, p. 377), while Lawrence Phillips and Anne Witchard characterize the Gothic as a genre in which "the 'centre' is probed from the periphery" (2010, p. 4). As a "reactionary genre" that "respond[s] to prevailing emotional environments" (Davenport-Hines 1998, p. 377), the Gothic is well-suited to Amis's reputation as a satirist; in *London Fields*, the author creates in the character

of Guy Clinch's monstrous son Marmaduke a figure whose farcical Gothic qualities enable a biting critique of the discourses that surround nuclear armament.

Recent explorations of Amis's penchant for satire have been marked by a mixture of admiration and criticism. Magdalena Maczynska identifies a "twinned impulse toward satire and fantastic vision" (2010, p. 58) in both *London Fields* and *Other People* that she argues is put to the purposes of articulating the way nuclear anxiety "contaminates" both urban space and the people who live in it (p. 82). The tone of Robert S. Baker's exploration of Amis's satirical impulse is somewhat more critical; while he calls Amis's work "insightful" (p. 552) and concludes that Amis is "the most successful satirist of his generation" (p. 553), he finds his work "too often confusedly glib and contradictory" (2005, p. 552). For Baker, Amis's use of the grotesque as a form of irony, while providing a "satiric gain" that aids in Amis's social satire, does so at an "intellectual loss" (p. 552). Ian Gregson notes American novelist John Updike's lack of sympathy with what he calls Amis's "'post-human' satire" but calls it the mode in which Amis "has achieved his most effective writing" (Gregson 2006, p. 132). So though its reception may not be universally positive, Amis's reputation as a satirist cannot be ignored, and its particularly post-human inflection aligns it with the Gothic's comic turn.

While the Gothic is known for its dealing in excess, humour in the Gothic is less well-studied, least of all its role in addressing collective anxieties. However, Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik's recent inquiry into the "comic Gothic" (2012, p. 321) yields new ways of reading the Gothic that shed light on *London Fields*'s post-human satirical impulse, which finds its most pointed expression in the character of Guy Clinch's monstrous son, Marmaduke. Arguing that the comical aspects of the Gothic have previously been overlooked in the will to legitimize the Gothic as a valid field of literary inquiry, Horner and Zlosnik note the emergence, around the same time as the Gothic, of melodrama and opera and argue that writers like Horace Walpole and Clara Reeve incorporate farcical elements in their novels for which they are indebted to these two genres: "The creators of early Gothic and early opera," Horner and Zlosnik write, are "both castigated for ignoring generic conventions; for embracing surface rather than depth; for delight in excess: the result is 'absurd' and 'monstrous' works that make you laugh as well as cry" (2012, p. 325). This hybridity that the authors argue is inherent to the Gothic "opens up the possibility of a comic turn in the presence of horror or terror" (p. 322),

which is one way that the Gothic's hybridity "makes possible a mixed response to the loss of transcendence that characterizes the modern condition" (p. 323), something arguably even more applicable to the postmodern condition explored in Amis's novel.

In *London Fields*, such hybrid moments of horror and comedy highlight the absurdity of the task of bearing witness to the traumas of the twentieth-century *fin de siècle*, with the result being to evoke an ambivalent response of terror as well as laughter, however nervous such laughter might be.[15] Interestingly, Horner and Zlosnik identify the characteristics that Gothic and postmodern fiction share. They note, for example, how Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) "metaphorically draws attention several times to the close relationship between horror and laughter in a way that suggests a metafictive awareness" (2012, p. 326). Further, the authors argue that by "mingling emotional opposites such as mirth and terror," the Gothic "reflects the psychic world more accurately than realist writing—which is not to deny its simultaneous reflection of contemporary anxieties and values" (p. 326). By highlighting the Gothic's dual role in engaging with contemporary anxieties and in probing the inner world of the mind through its emphasis on emotionality, the authors tacitly align the Gothic with trauma fiction, which, as we have already seen, shares formal qualities with both postmodernism and romance. These authors' examination of not only the terror of the Gothic, but also the farcical, the exaggerated, and the absurd strengthens the links already present between the Gothic, the postmodern, and the traumatic in *London Fields*.

In particular, the farcical quality that surrounds Guy Clinch's monstrous son reflects the infantilizing rhetoric that Amis argues surrounds nuclear technology. Steven Bruhm theorizes the monstrous child as the centre of the Gothic transformation of domestic spaces "from mythical site of comfort and safety to fantastical and phantasmatic slaughterhouse," transforming these domestic spaces into "microcosms of the political, social, and religious tyrannies of (usually) fathers" (2006, p. 98). Marmaduke is a prime example of Bruhm's Gothic child, violently transforming Guy's home, and marriage, into a nightmare. In this case, however, the tyranny that the environment surrounding Marmaduke could be said to reflect does not seem to be that of his father—passive,

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[15] The dark comic vein that runs through *London Fields* also has something in common with absurdist literature, which Neil Cornwell describes as "born of nihilism, out of existentialism, fuelled by the certainty of death" (2006, p. 5).

mild-mannered Guy—but rather that of his mother, the much more aggressive Hope. It is Guy who is typically seen tending to Marmaduke—and consequently enduring a slew of beatings from the terrible child—while Hope cavorts with her aptly named tennis partner, Dink Heckler. This reversal of what Bruhm identifies as the typical metaphorical significance of the home corrupted by the Gothic child is significant on two fronts. First, Guy's cuckolding by Hope is an act of diminishment that reflects what Amis has identified as the "resilient theme of infantilism throughout the history of nuclear management," noting that "[t]he Hiroshima bomb was called Little Boy …. It is ironic, because *they* are the little boys; *we* are the little boys" (1987, p. 6). Second, the fact that Hope is both "brightly American (and rich)" (Amis 1989, p. 27) ties Marmaduke to the atomic bomb, as the "Little Boy" that is the abject offspring of his American and British parents.

The novel relies on Marmaduke's farcical characterization in order to convey both his allegorical significance and the absurdity of the rhetoric of infantilism surrounding nuclear war. The Clinches' home life is tied to nuclear armament by way of wordplay: when Nicola, after contriving the story of Enola Gay and her son Little Boy, inquires as to Guy's marital status, he tells her that he has been married for fifteen years and that "I too have a little boy." Nicola responds, "'Nuclear …. How romantic. Well done'" (p. 125). Within the Clinch household, cartoonish descriptions of Marmaduke's violent nature centre on nuclear imagery. When Guy must face the arduous task of transporting Marmaduke, it is by "[h]olding the screaming child out in front of him like a rugby ball or a bag of plutonium" (p. 83). His toys are exclusively militaristic, his "latest deployment (part of a permanent modernization programme)" consisting of "a DID, or Deep Interdiction Device, a pucklike boobytrap which could take out three or four toy tanks at a time," a weapon that is "certainly far larger than the actual contrivance now fielded by Nato" (p. 220). He is also described as one who would "unquestionably favour First Use" (p. 220), wording long associated with nuclear weapons.

The only tactic that succeeds in quelling Marmaduke's violence is the "Pinching Game," a kiddie-version of mutual assured destruction contrived by Nicola in which Marmaduke is allowed to pinch Nicola as hard as he pleases—provided she is allowed to pinch him just as hard back. The incredible degree of oversignification with which Marmaduke is characterized leads to rather easy conclusions: that of nuclear warfare as a kind of sick joke. But Jack Halberstam's theorization of the Gothic trope

of the monstrous in a postmodern context offers more nuanced insight. While Halberstam argues that the monstrous has typically provided an image of deviance against which we can register normalcy,

> [w]ithin postmodern Gothic we no longer attempt to identify the monster and fix the terms of his/her deformity[;] rather postmodern Gothic warns us to be suspicious of monster hunters, monster makers, and above all, discourses invested in purity and innocence. The monster always represents the disruption of categories, the destruction of boundaries, and the presence of impurities. (1991, p. 27)

In the midst of the war of discourse that characterizes nuclear armament, the novel's constant emphasis on Marmaduke's violent tendencies resists the rhetoric of infantilism that ensconces nuclear warfare and that consequently and misleadingly transforms the discourse of nuclear armament into a discourse of innocence. Marmaduke's physical violence is no joke: his parents keep watch over him in a control room fitted with dozens of television monitors so that "[e]ven in sleep the child [is] not unmonitored, unmediated" (Amis 1989, p. 279), highlighting the dissonance between this discourse of innocence and the actual physical threat of nuclear war. Further, the absurd appearing alongside the terrifying in these descriptions of Marmaduke contributes to the novel's disorienting mix of styles and forms, mirroring on a structural level the disorienting quality of traumatic experience.

The participation of *London Fields* in the Gothic mode articulates the particular challenges nuclear anxiety poses to narration in a number of ways. The language of the sublime functions as a useful framework for understanding the shattering impact of nuclear anxiety on the frame of reference of contemporary witnesses like Samson and Nicola. The uncanny provides a productive means of negotiating the ineffability at the heart of bearing witness to nuclear anxiety as a form of social violence. On a structural level, this ineffability takes the form of the black hole into which the reliability of memory collapses, lending a jumbled and confusing quality to the narrative. The resulting lack of clarity in Samson's narrative reflects the lacuna at the heart of a trauma that, if enacted, would eliminate its own witnesses. Ultimately, the novel's participation in the Gothic allows for clear links to be drawn between the crisis of representation produced by late twentieth-century nuclear anxiety and the type of sociopolitical anxiety characterizing the origins of the Gothic at the turn of the eighteenth century.

One must be careful, however, not to fall into the critical cliché of viewing the Gothic as merely an expression of the impossibility of articulation. The resurgence of the Gothic in works of trauma fiction, like *London Fields*, goes beyond merely rehearsing easy conclusions about the unrepresentability of trauma, pushing forward to grapple with the need to bear witness to trauma in what Luckhurst deems "torturous times" (2010, p. 11). Given the war of discourse that surrounds it, nuclear armament and its related anxieties are prime examples of the overcoded historical traces Luckhurst identifies, and it is by participating in genre that the discursive nature of nuclear war is captured alongside the traumatic tensions it generates, allowing for specific critiques of these discourses. By offering exaggerated, grotesque caricatures of such abjectified figures as the monstrous child, the Gothic dismantles assumptions of corruption and purity that surround such figures and, in this context, challenges this binary in relation to the rhetoric of nuclear war. Thus the Gothic expands the narrative potential to fulfil the political imperatives identified by Luckhurst, offering up the narrative possibilities necessary to challenge a trauma fiction paradigm that risks wallowing in aporia. Though the absurdity surrounding the figure of Marmaduke again gestures toward nuclear war's fundamental unthinkability, it produces a tangible critique, moving beyond merely dwelling on trauma's resistance to representation.

In these ways, the Gothic in *London Fields* allows for testimony in the face of inexpressibility. By deploying a Gothic/gallows humour to release the traumatic tensions surrounding nuclear armament even as it bears witness to these tensions through Samson and Nicola's testimonies, the novel challenges the critical cliché of the Gothic as merely a means of rehearsing supposedly unknowable or inexpressible cultural anxieties. Additionally, the novel problematizes the tendency within trauma theory to focus too narrowly on the "the nature and limitations of narrative" and how "to convey the damaging and distorting impact of the traumatic event" (Whitehead 2004, p. 82). While *London Fields* may at first appear to conform to a paradigm of postmodern trauma fiction that wallows in aporia and unthinkability, the intersection of the Gothic and trauma in Amis's novel acts as the vehicle through which, by insisting on bearing witness to violence in the face of the challenges such violence poses to testimony, trauma's event horizon may be breached.

Of course, there are limits to what this mode of representation can do: Samson's often objectifying representation of Nicola's sexuality enacts its own form of violence that troubles trauma fiction's claims to empathy.

This kind of challenge is a trend in each of the novels discussed here, and it will come to the fore in Chap. 3's exploration of the spectatorial anxieties that impede the contemporary witness to trauma, particularly when the witness occupies a privileged position in relation to victims. Further, the hope for a brighter future that Samson expresses in his final letter to Kim is undermined by the fact that he has ignored the signs that she may be a victim of parental abuse. Given Samson's authorial and narrative power, his denial of responsibility for Kim as a victim of trauma imposes limits on trauma theory's ethical project, rendering Samson's optimism somewhat hollow. The tension between authorial power and empathic representation will again return in Chap. 4's analysis of *Atonement* and Briony's belief in the redemptive powers of her own narrative. In this way, *London Fields* sets the stage for the complexities of witnessing that reveal themselves in the novels to follow.

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Gothic Collisions: Regarding Trauma in Margaret Drabble's *The Gates of Ivory*

Like *London Fields*, Margaret Drabble's *The Gates of Ivory* (1991) is in many ways concerned with the discursive nature of the contemporary subject's relationship to distant violence, particularly the spectatorial effect of mass media on the witness's relationship to this violence at the end of the twentieth century. Drabble's novel departs, however, from the nuclear anxieties saturating Amis's to deal instead with the Cambodian genocide and related issues of colonial and capitalist exploitation that contributed to the rise of Pol Pot and the rule of the Khmer Rouge from 1975–1979, and which continue in the aftermath of the fallen regime. As Drabble herself has expressed in a personal interview, *The Gates of Ivory* is partly a response to the asymmetrical global proliferation of television media in the 1980s and 1990s (Drabble 2016), which had a profound influence on the act of bearing witness to instances of contemporary collective trauma. The novel presents its protagonist Liz Headland, an upper-middle-class London psychiatrist, as a passive spectator of such distant violence—particularly to the trauma of the Cambodian genocide and to its continuing legacy of political extremism—who is oblivious to her implication as Western subject in the imperialist violence that led to, and persists in the wake of, Pol Pot's Cambodia. Liz's relationship to the violence she, like others in the UK and the West, consumes daily is marked by a complex mixture of fear and desire and is mediated by a television and print news cycle that acts as a semi-permeable membrane allowing Liz, as spectator, controlled access to the "atrocity stories" that both horrify and entice.

Due to its massive scale, its suppression of information, and the isolation of 1970s Cambodia from much of the world, the Cambodian genocide, like the threat of total nuclear annihilation that Amis's novel tackles, fits Felman and Laub's paradigm of an event eliminating its own witness. As such, its mediation by images, statistics, and news reports manages not to increase its understanding by those who consume it, but rather, paradoxically, to impede it. The event demands a mode of representation which acknowledges this paradox and its implications for provoking an empathic response in the reader-witness. This is precisely the mode of representation that the novel's participation in the Gothic provides. Reflecting continuities between Romantic and contemporary experiences of wartime trauma, *The Gates of Ivory* makes use of certain Gothic elements that rupture the threshold that allows Liz, the spectator (and by extension, the reader, who, through the novel's omniscient narrator, experiences events largely through Liz's point of view), to selectively take in violence from a position of safety. Instead, these Gothic elements bring Liz into uncomfortable proximity both with victims and with her responsibility to be not merely a spectator, but a witness. However, like *London Fields*, in which Samson's final message of hope to Keith's baby daughter Kim rings hollow after the novel's intense preoccupation with trauma's representational limits, *The Gates of Ivory*, too, offers only the most qualified of opportunities for empathic connection through testimony. The novel's participation in the Gothic thus also highlights the way in which representations of individual atrocity stories that underpin collective trauma, while allowing for empathic identification between victim and witness, can be equally complicit in maintaining their separations.

Like *London Fields*, which concerns both the collective trauma of broad-scale nuclear anxiety and the individual trauma of characters like Samson Young and Nicola Six, *The Gates of Ivory* connects narratives of personal trauma to various forms of collective trauma (including representation itself). After receiving a mysterious parcel in the mail from her long-time friend Stephen Cox, a writer who has been missing for several years after travelling to Cambodia to write a play about Pol Pot, Liz is awakened to the individual "atrocity stories" that underpin the staggering scale of the genocide: an event to which she otherwise has only the most tenuous of connections, mediated by daily news reports that make up the background noise to her and her friends' comfortable everyday existence. Containing—among a jumble of documents, photographs, news clippings, and materials for a new novel—two fragments of human finger bone, the

package from Stephen forces Liz to confront not only the violence of the Cambodian genocide as a historical event but also the colonial and capitalist violence that preceded it,[1] in which she is implicated.

Through this confrontation, the novel responds to Francis Fukuyama's belief in the "ultimate triumph of Western liberal democracy" (2003, p. 114)—which he identifies as ushering in "The End of History"—as a political inevitability that erases the Western subject's complicity in capitalist and colonial exploitation. In "The End of History?" Fukuyama argues that

> [t]he twentieth century saw the developed world descend into a paroxysm of ideological violence, as liberalism contended first with the remnants of absolutism, then bolshevism and fascism, and finally an updated Marxism that threatened to lead to the ultimate apocalypse of nuclear war. But the century that began full of self-confidence in the ultimate triumph of Western liberal democracy seems at its close to be returning full circle to where it started: not to an "end of ideology" or a convergence between capitalism and socialism, as earlier predicted, but to an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism. (p. 114)

Fukuyama calls what he sees as the exhaustion of viable alternatives to political liberalism "[t]he triumph … of the Western idea," the evidence for which, he argues, can be found in the "unmistakable changes in the intellectual climate of the world's two largest communist countries, and the beginnings of significant reform movements in both" (p. 114). He conflates the move towards Western liberal democracy in formerly Marxist nations with a global embrace of Western consumer culture, citing the export of Western consumer products to "such diverse contexts as the peasants' markets and color television sets now omnipresent throughout China, the cooperative restaurants and clothing stores opened in the past year in Moscow, the Beethoven piped into Japanese department stores, and the rock music enjoyed alike in Prague, Rangoon, and Tehran" (p. 114) as further signs of the inevitable worldwide embrace of political liberalism and an end to ideological conflict. By bringing its protagonist into direct contact with victims still struggling, decades later, with the lingering traumatic impacts of Pol Pot's Marxist "Year Zero" policies,

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[1] Pol Pot himself had an unsuccessful education in Paris, part of what makes him such an alluring figure to Stephen, who wonders whether "a million Cambodians died to avenge Pol Pot's defeat at the hands of the French educational system" (Drabble 1991, p. 12).

which saw the displacement of over 2 million Cambodian citizens to agrarian forced-labour camps and the eventual extermination of some 1.7 million (Kiernan 2008, p. xi), *The Gates of Ivory* seeks to demonstrate "how wrong he [Fukuyama] was" (Drabble 2016), and how his argument enacts its own form of violent erasure of the non-Western subject.

While Liz will encounter direct victims of the genocide (most notably one Mme Savet Akrun, who lives in a resettlement camp along the Thai-Cambodian border and who has lost a son in the conflict), perhaps the novel's clearest embodiment of the more latent forms of violence embedded within Fukuyama's argument appears in the Thai beauty queen Stephen encounters on his flight to Bangkok, Miss Porntip. She embraces Western capitalism with unbridled zeal, earnestly affirming that Fukuyama's "End of History" has arrived, and, along with it, "more Coca-Cola … more aeroplanes … more TV … more choice, more liberty, more democracy" (Drabble 1991, p. 106). Miss Porntip also believes in Fukuyama's theory as a political certainty, insisting that "'[i]t never roll back now. Is finished. Socialism finished, simplicity finished, poverty finished, USSR and China and Vietnam all finished. Liberty, is all. Growth, is all. Dollars, is all'" (p. 109).

However, Miss Porntip's deceptively straightforward account of the triumph of Western capitalism and imperialism belies the way in which she is, herself, a victim of these very systems. She objectifies herself for Stephen's benefit, entertaining him by "taking off all her clothes and adorning herself with trinkets … a ruby and diamond necklace about her throat, a ruby pendant in her navel, and a honey diamond dragonfly brooch pinned into her pubic hair" (p. 109); she brings him to a brothel in which a number of young Thai girls are dressed as Western-style brides in "cream and ivory lace … satins and silks and sprigged muslins" (p. 64); she conforms to the racist and Orientalist stereotypes of a sexualized, exotic East, "weav[ing] her spell" on the "unresisting" (p. 79) Stephen. The aptly named Miss Porntip is thus not only a victim of the "triumph" of capitalism and its othering impulses, but she is also its very symbol, to the point that she is repeatedly characterized as not-real: first by Stephen, who ascribes to her the allegorical label "Lust" (p. 41) and later by Liz and others who, reading through Stephen's novel, assume she could only be "some kind of erotic fantasy of poor old Stephen's" (48). Miss Porntip, despite giving the impression of an empowered "woman of the world" (54) and "New Woman of the East" (p. 79), is still in many ways imprisoned by a legacy of colonialism: the same legacy that led to the ideological extremism of the

Khmer Rouge. Much like Fukuyama's narrative, Miss Porntip's easy conclusions about the triumph of capitalism belie a legacy of trauma perpetrated by the West that reverberates long after the conflict between capitalism and Marxism has seemingly ceased.

By imprisoning her in Western colonial and sexist stereotypes, the narrative of Stephen's behaviour (and, in the case of the fragments of his novel included in the package to Liz, his authorial narrative) is ambivalent at best; at worst, it risks committing further violence by abstracting Miss Porntip in a way that, much like Fukuyama's narrative, erases her from history.[2] As Fukuyama writes, "it matters very little what strange thoughts occur to people in Albania or Burkina Faso, for we are interested in what one could in some sense call the ideological heritage of mankind" (2003, p. 116). Of course, it does matter, since the assumption of ubiquitous capitalism as a political inevitability places the Western subject in the position of passive onlooker to ideologically motivated violence occurring elsewhere, waiting for such conflicts to reach their inevitable conclusions and supplantation by Fukuyama's "Western idea": a notion to which *The Gates of Ivory* returns a scathing critique.

Stephen's abstraction of Miss Porntip enacts the violent erasure of colonial subjects in Fukuyama's "End of History," and her representation reflects the novel's broader challenging of claims by narrative—and by mass media—to be a means of shoring up empathy for victims of collective trauma. Characterizing the plot of *The Gates of Ivory* as "full of speed and globalism and changing technology," Drabble herself views the novel in part as a response to a rapid but disproportionate proliferation of global

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[2] Miss Porntip is the focal point of many of Stephen's unabashedly Orientalist depictions of his journeys through Vietnam and Thailand to the Cambodian border, which are separated from the main text by italics: "*This is the gorgeous East*," Stephen writes. "*Conrad was here*" (p. 47). The novel's ambivalent treatment of Miss Porntip reflects the novel's broader engagement with, and problematization of, a Conradian view of "The Orient." Roger Bowen argues that this ambivalence derives from Drabble's recognition of the postcolonial imperative "to increase the role and give more voice and subjectivity to the indigenous other" entering into conflict with her seeming unwillingness "to surrender completely those orientalizing habits of characterization, evident in the representation of [Miss Porntip's] speech and her sexual power…. In sum, Miss Porntip's economic ascendancy and cultural hybridity remain a provocative but problematic model" (1999, p. 283). However, given the novel's degree of self-reflexivity, it seems likely that this ambivalence is intentional and reflective of a broader interrogation of the biases that enter into ostensibly ethical forms of representation of "the Other," which come into sharp focus in Liz's encounter with another heavily stereotyped figure, Mme Savet Akrun.

mass media in the 1980s and 1990s (Drabble 2016). Contrary to the expectation that such an increase in connectivity might result in increased empathy across societies and cultures—Norbert Wiener, for example, asserted in 1948 that the development of new information technologies "would prevent humanity from plunging us back into the world of Belsen and Hiroshima" (1961, p. 28)—critics like Jean Baudrillard swiftly locate, in the rapid proliferation of television media in particular, a tendency merely towards surface spectacle, with the intensity of the television-screen image sullying the distinction between reality and representation, making the on-screen image seem more real than the reality without. This tendency towards spectacle is especially evident in media reports of distant violence: as individuals in the West consume daily news reports of atrocities witnessed from afar with an almost frenetic voracity, the presumed connection between viewer and viewed more closely approaches one-sided voyeurism than mutual connection, with the pacifying effect on viewer empathy much like that produced by Fukuyama's End of History. Baudrillard's assertion that "the media are producers not of socialization, but of exactly the opposite, of the implosion of the social in the masses" (1994, p. 81) tacitly affirms Fukuyama's prediction within contemporary culture of an end to political revolution, with the "dissuasive action of information, the media, and the mass media" (p. 79) promoting viewership without critical thought and without social responsibility.

Though the simultaneity of contemporary engagement with television and print media, particularly the news cycle, has been theorized by some postmodern critics as inherently overwhelming or even "shocking,"[3] this is not precisely the effect the novel conveys. Rather, the media as portrayed in the novel more closely approximates Freud's model of the "psychic apparatus" as (counter-intuitively) akin to a shield *against* stimuli. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud draws an analogy between this psychic apparatus and the physical barrier separating living organisms from their external environment. In this analogy, the mind is a "little fragment of living substance" that is "suspended in the middle of an external world charged with the most powerful energies; and it would be killed by the stimulation emanating from these were it not provided with a protective

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[3] This is the view put forth by Alvin Toffler in *Future Shock* (1970), in which he coins the phrase "information overload" to describe the way in which the "cognitive overstimulation" produced by the constant novelty that mass media generates "interferes with our ability to 'think'" (p. 311).

shield against stimuli" (2016, p. 21). This "shield" is, in essence, consciousness, which functions "as a special envelope or membrane resistant to stimuli" (2016, p. 21). Much like a cell membrane, the consciousness allows for the selective passage of these external "energies" through to "the next underlying layers, which have remained living, with only a fragment of their original intensity; and these layers can devote themselves, behind the protective shield, to the reception of the amounts of stimulus which have been allowed through it" (2016, p. 21). Freud then concludes that "[p]rotection against stimuli is an almost more important function for the living organism than reception of stimuli" (2016, p. 31).

Like *London Fields*, in which Keith regularly confuses physical reality with what he views on-screen, *The Gates of Ivory* is intensely preoccupied with the ways in which its characters' relationship to world events—and particularly traumatic violence—is mediated by screens of various kinds, whether television, film, the printed page, or the camera lens. In this way, the novel highlights the problematic role of television and newspaper sources in mediating the relationship between traumatic events taking place at a remove and individuals like Liz who, because she is not a victim of the genocide but experiences only a mediated account of its traumatic impacts, might be labelled a secondary witness (in spite of Caruth's claims that the unlocalizability of trauma blurs such distinctions). Much as Freud's model of the consciousness emphasizes its role in protecting the individual from, as well as receiving, stimuli, so too does the novel foreground the way in which mass media screens the raw materiality of the distant trauma it conveys to its Western audiences, so that the act of witnessing such violence is emptied of its power to move viewers to empathy by way of identification with victims.

Instead, the relationship of the novel's characters to what they view on screen is one of frenetic and often pleasurable consumption. As the novel's opening passage states, "[t]he dead and dying travel fast these days. We can devour thousands at breakfast with our toast and coffee, and thousands more on the evening news" (p. 4). In this cynical though not inaccurate assessment of the contemporary media landscape in the final decade of the twentieth century, the narrator sets the tone for the highly mediated and voyeuristic relationship of nearly all of the characters in Liz's London social circle to violence, demonstrating the blurring effect that this process of mediation has between violence as trauma (which demands, according to Caruth, an empathic response) and violence as morally stultifying, even

entertaining, spectacle. The narrator's assessment is echoed by characters themselves, like Stephen's literary agent Hattie Osborne, who, after viewing Malraux's *La Condition Humaine*, set during the Chinese Communist Revolution, glibly muses that there is "[n]othing like a nice film about torture, bombs and death by cyanide to cheer one up" (p. 218). Later, when speculating about Stephen's possible death in Cambodia, Hattie is certain that major film companies will be "on to him. Like vultures," even noting the cheapness of Hawaii as a possible location for Stephen's future biopic (p. 249). Though her tone is deeply cynical, Hattie's assessment of the public's hunger for so-called atrocity stories is ruthlessly accurate.

This hunger is one that Stephen himself is eager to fill. The play he wishes to write about the rise and fall of Pol Pot will inevitably turn the trauma of the Cambodian genocide into a vehicle for mass entertainment, as will the planned documentary on the same subject by filmmaker Gabriel Denham. (Liz already doubts this project's veracity.) The narrator speaks of this representational process as an act of consumption—of Stephen's desire "to sup full on the horrors of Phnom Penh" (p. 225)—and Stephen meets many who are similarly involved with creative projects that transform the collective trauma of the Cambodian genocide into fodder for consumption by eager Western audiences, doing so in a way that blurs the boundary between reality and fiction, such as having "a Kampuchean refugee who is playing the role of a Kampuchean refugee in an American semi-fictionalized documentary about Kampuchean refugees" (p. 103).

The distorting effect that these mediated representations of violence have on the characters' perception of reality is evident in the work of Stephen's photographer friend and travel companion, Konstantin Vassiliou. For example, Konstantin's camera lens reshapes the story of the victims of the Khmer Rouge regime by its award-winning representation of one victim, Mme Savet Akrun. Liz, despite knowing Mme Akrun only by this fund-raising charity-ad photograph and a newspaper article, nonetheless feels fully qualified to make far-reaching assumptions about her experience: assumptions which, Liz comes to learn, are largely based on the stereotypes of perpetual victimhood that Konstantin's photography perpetuates (and upon which his reputation as a photographer relies). The narrator highlights the hidden self-interested motivations that lie behind the photo, taken under the guise of generating an empathic connection between viewer and viewed. The subject of the picture has no agency; Akrun "does not know that her photograph has won a prize and made her and its

creator famous, after a manner," nor "that she has stared down from hoardings in large affluent cities to appeal for funds for the work of the ICRDP," nor "that the chance artistic and worldly ambitions of Konstantin Vassiliou have turned her into an icon" (p. 136).

Reality is also constantly called into question by competing (often alternate) versions of the truth, as when "[v]isions of Phnom Penh animate [Stephen's] dreams," leading him to question

> [w]ho guards the grim records of Tuol Sleng Incarceration Centre? Whose skulls form the terrible pyramids? Are *they* really real? Dreams of the tourist mausoleums of Auschwitz and Jerusalem, of film-footage from the liberation of the death camps, of the unfilmed atrocities of Tamburlaine, mingle with Cambodian images in Stephen's hot night as he tosses and turns beneath a thin sheet. (p. 226, original emphasis)

This mingling of reality and representation is again evident in Stephen's often feverish, surreal, and highly stylized descriptions of life travelling through Cambodia towards the border camps. In addition to these descriptions, accounts of Stephen's whereabouts over the last several years are only ever partial and conspicuously unreliable, serving as a source of endless fascination, speculation, and gossip for Liz, her friend Alix Bowen, and Hattie Osborne (all of whom spend a great deal of the novel ruminating on what could have happened to Stephen and often, narcissistically, on what it means for their relationship to him). With Liz's consciousness as the narrative focus through which readers learn of Stephen's whereabouts after his long absence, the arrival of the package from Stephen constitutes the necessary "stimulus" (Freud 2016, p. 21) that will shatter the presumed boundary between the package's images of atrocity and Liz as seemingly non-implicated viewer, shocking her out of her comfortable role of mere spectator and into that of ethically implicated witness.[4] Therefore, while representation can indeed inflict trauma, as is the case

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[4] *OED* definitions of "Witness" (n.) include "the action or condition of being an observer of an event," and "[a]ttestation of a fact, event, or statement; testimony, evidence; evidence given in a court of justice" (2016), both implying a testimonial obligation. In contrast, definitions of "spectator" (n.)—"person who sees, or looks on at, some scene or occurrence; a beholder, onlooker, observer, and "[a] person who is present at, and has a view or sight of, anything in the nature of a show or spectacle"(2019)—imply a layer of insulating distance (between audience and stage, stadium seat and playing field, or either side of the television screen) that absolves the viewer from any obligation beyond that of passive onlooker. One definition of "witness" does, however, conflate the testimonial with the spectatorial—"[o]ne who is or was

with Miss Porntip's portrayal, the arrival of the package also presents an opportunity for Liz (and, through her, readers) to try to actually see for herself, beyond mediated images served up as spectacle for consumption. By spurring Liz to empathic action, the package suggests that the trauma of representation might, perhaps, be mitigated.

The Gates of Ivory is unmistakably postmodern in its deployment of self-conscious and metafictional narration, a fragmented structure, and its explicit concern with contemporary media and representation itself. However, though Drabble asserts that she is a postmodern author (despite critical impressions to the contrary),[5] the package from Stephen constitutes the intervention of a Romantic (and specifically Gothic) narrative trope that disrupts the complacency of the viewer in order to convey the impact of the trauma of the Cambodian genocide, all the while foregrounding the complications that representation introduces into generating empathy between victim and witness. Jean-Michel Ganteau and Susana Onega have described this sort of intervention into what they term "traumatic realism," observing in the genre a "formal affinity with the poetics of romance, where romance seems to be solicited whenever realism fails to evoke limit-case situations" (2012, pp. 1–2). The authors contend that the "urgent and irrepressible need to represent trauma" has "forced fiction to problematize the traditional conventions of transparent realism" by "incorporating the most salient modal strategies of romance" in order to "move towards the contrary pole of unabated fictionality and fantasy" (p. 3), thus, by mimicking the way in which trauma lies in excess of the rational, inviting readers to share in the traumatic experience conveyed by the text-as-testimony. Often this incorporation takes the form of the Gothic: what the authors term Romance's "fantastic development" (p. 3).

In similar fashion, Mary Favret traces the use of the conventions of the Romantic tradition in contemporary representations of trauma, particularly in a wartime context. Favret's study is pertinent to the Gothic strategies through which *The Gates of Ivory* articulates the experience of bearing witness to distant atrocities. By examining "how war becomes part of the

present and is able to testify from personal observation; one present as a spectator or auditor"—pinpointing the danger for witnessing to slide into spectatorship (2016).

[5] When asked in an interview if she considers herself to be a postmodern author, Drabble takes issue with the way critics have attached to her novels the label of "realist," "often in a hostile kind of way," and states that she was, even in her earliest work, "already doing something quite different there and I've gone on doing it—sort of moving on from realism" (Drabble 2000).

barely registered substance of our everyday" (2010, p. 9), Favret contends that our contemporary means of articulating "the complex working of time-consciousness and feeling that accompanies and shapes the awareness—but also the unknown-ness—of modern, distant war" were birthed in the Romantic period (2010, p. 1). For the eighteenth-century subject, the experience of distant warfare was radically reshaped by the unprecedented scale of the Napoleonic wars, which Favret contends became the first "total war" (2010, p. 29). These wars, she claims, were "shown to operate both globally, and, simultaneously, within the everyday," cultivating what Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in "Frost at Midnight," calls "'dim sympathies' (Coleridge 2006, l. 18) between present and absent realities" (Favret 2010, p. 29). Favret maintains that the Western subject's highly mediated experience of contemporary warfare, too, has its roots in the eighteenth century, which saw individuals at home gain more access to news of the battles taking place abroad than ever before due to a burgeoning print media, which led to a "punctuated eventfulness within dailiness" that created "a sense of living in the meantime, waiting for news of events which happened at a distance both geographical and temporal" (2010, p. 73).

And yet the newspapers (recalling Freud's model of the psychic apparatus) also proved to be, Favret argues, a barrier to feeling, laying the groundwork for the role contemporary mass media plays in maintaining this separation. She notes how in William Cowper's "Winter Evening," the act of "retir[ing] to the hearth to read and ponder the teetering fate of empire" becomes part and parcel of "[t]he silence and the warmth enjoy'd within" the speaker's home (Cowper 1994, b. IV, l. 310). Favret argues that "in elaborating his evening rituals, the poet aims to shut out the 'noisy world' in the silence of his nightly reading: I behold/The tumult, and am still. The sound of war/ Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me; / Grieves, but alarms me not. I … /Hear the faint echo of those brazen throats/And sigh, but never tremble at the sound" (Cowper 1994, b. IV, l. 99–102, 104–6; qtd in Favret 2010, p. 3). The experience of war becomes part of "the intimacies of the home and hearth, the wanderings of the mind, the interruptions and lapses—of time, knowledge, and feeling—that compose the everyday," becoming "somehow fugitive and omnipresent at once" (Favret 2010, p. 4).

Favret's interpretation of the Romantic (and contemporary) subject's relationship to the daily news and its stultifying effect on empathy are readily applicable to Liz's relationship to the images of distant suffering

she encounters on the nightly news. Drawing from Niklas Luhmann's theory of the daily news as an "autopoietic system" that introduces "into a determined even if unknown world an area of self-determination which can then be dealt with in the system itself" (Luhmann 1996, p. 27), Favret suggests that the newspaper in Cowper's poem does not "bring the world to this fireside circle," but rather (echoing Baudrillard) "substitute[s] a simulacrum of that world" (Favret 2010, p. 67). For Favret, the mass media that turns everyday life itself into its own form of mediation of war from a distance begins with the rise of the daily newspaper, whose quotidian reports of foreign wars offer "a regular, cyclical arrangement of time, one that coordinates the close circle of home with larger turnings of the world and of history, all the while leaving the world and history elsewhere, 'disappeared'" (2010, p. 67). This at once intimate yet removed position affords the reader the "privileged view of the spectator," accompanied by an intoxicating "vacuity of thought" (2010, p. 71). In the case of *The Gates of Ivory*, the novel's opening image of multitudes of victims of distant violence being devoured over breakfast and again through the evening news partakes in what Favret identifies as a Romantic tradition of attempting to convey the "invasions, interruptions and flickering, foreboding strangers" (2010, p. 4)[6] that form the barely registered experience of mediated wartime: of those who, in the words of Drabble's narrator, "stumble across the bridge or through the river" between Good Time and Bad Time "maimed and bleeding, shocked and starving … try[ing] to tell us what it is like over there" (Drabble 1991, p. 3).

The Gates of Ivory makes the "absent presence" of wartime felt in the structure of scenes of the everyday, which form, in Favret's terms, a "structure of feeling akin to trauma, conveying in its gaps and silences an unrecoverable, absent sense of suffering" (2010, p. 145). The traumatic impacts of colonial and wartime violence, while largely relegated to the parts of the novel detailing Stephen's travels through Cambodia, occasionally surface in unharmonious juxtaposition with interior scenes of Liz's "Good Time" upper-middle-class life. These "Good Time" scenes, conveyed in realist style, clash with incantatory, surrealistic depictions of the horrifying realities of life under the Khmer Rouge regime. When Liz learns of Robert Oxenholme's rejected proposals of marriage to Esther

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[6] Here Favret alludes to the "stranger" on the grate from Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight": "the thin blue flame/Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;/Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,/Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing" (2006, pp. 13–16).

Breuer, for example, the awkward interaction between the three friends in London shifts jarringly to Liz's dreams of Cambodia:

Esther is appalled by Robert's low opinion of her discretion. She is ashamed. Perhaps his tone implied that he had never meant to marry her at all, that she had been a fool even to consider accepting him? Perhaps the whole thing had been an incomprehensible upper-class joke? In the silence of profound uncertainty, they are conveyed magisterially through the back streets of Kilburn. Liz dreams of temples and monkeys and tigers, of chattering and screeching, of jungles and ruins and an ambush on an ill-made road. (p. 77)

The petty gossip and preoccupations of Robert and Esther—the "Good Time" conversations of the privileged lives of Liz and her social circle—clash with the realities of "Bad Time" as mediated by Liz's dreams. Crucially, the phrase "Liz dreams" does not convey whether Liz is dreaming these dreams in the exact moment the three are walking together or whether it describes the state of being that characterizes her everyday life since her receipt of the package from Stephen. The frequency with which similar juxtapositions appear would seem to indicate the latter, indicating the degree to which Liz's experience of everyday life has begun to be filtered through wartime reality. Conversely, this wartime reality (which the ambush on the ill-made road encapsulates) as filtered through Liz's dreams is nonetheless still cloaked in the conventions of the exoticized and Orientalized East (the generic space of the "jungles," exotic animals, and ruins), suggesting the sort of vacuity of thought that for Favret is characteristic of the experience of war at a distance (and again hearkening back to representation as its own form of violence, potentially dampening its empathic ambitions).

A second such scene registers the lingering traumatic impacts of genocide taking place alongside the "Good Time" tableau by way of the Gothic's return of the repressed in the form of Pol Pot as uncanny doppelgänger. The episode details the goings-on at a fundraising dinner in support of a UNESCO project for temple restoration, attended by Liz and her ex-husband Charles, as well as Robert and Esther. But the fundraiser's noble cause is sullied by the arrogant and condescending attitudes of its guests, many of whom were or are currently implicated in colonial exploitation and who continue with varying degrees of intentionality to construct the Eastern subject as Other. Seated next to Liz is Robert, daydreaming of tempting Esther "with a honeymoon in Egypt, with pyramids, and with Petra and Palmyra and the pleasures of ruins" (p. 68)

whose political and historical circumstances are overwritten with their value as tourist objects. On her other side is a British diplomat whose "watery innocent blue eyes" mist over as he "recalls that heroic journey of his youth" through Cambodia "in the old days" of French colonialism, with its "quiet, sweet, gentle, good-natured people! Nothing was too much trouble for them! Such simple people, but so kind!" (p. 69). Finally, seated across from Liz is an "austere sallow late-middle-aged French woman" whose father has been killed by guerrillas along the Saigon-Phnom Penh highway, and she sparks a discussion of "the legacy of colonialism and the brutalization of native populations" in a tone that is "less apologetic … than it would have been ten years earlier"; in an openly racist display, the French woman calls the carvings at Angkor Wat (whose restoration the dinner, ironically, is intended to fund) "'Crude'" and "'*Primitif*'" (p. 69).

The racist and Orientalist attitudes of the guests continue to enact the trauma of colonialism that the apparent "Good Time" scene attempts to erase (again demonstrating the Western subject's implication in colonial traumas to which they are oblivious), but which returns in the form of the Gothic uncanny: the sudden appearance of the unfamiliar at the heart of the familiar. The narration emphasizes the mundane "chatter chatter glitter, munch munch, chatter chatter munch" of these privileged dinner guests, who include royalty, business magnates, television announcers, film-makers, Swiss bankers, Japanese industrialists, Scottish lairds, New Zealand animal rights activists, and Korean airline operators. A microcosm of international relations plays out in the minor social dramas of these London elite:

> The King of Brandipura wipes his glasses on a large old-fashioned blue silk handkerchief…. Saharan scholar Frances Wingate tries hard to catch the soft murmurs of a modest but relentless Sinhalese monk…. A Swiss banker pockets the card of a Japanese industrialist…. The Brazilian-born wife of an American conglomerate thinks she will die of boredom if her neighbour does not stop talking about the ecosystem. (p. 75)

As the narrator asserts, "The United Nations are at play. The world goes round" (p. 75). Nowhere is Fukuyama's notion of the End of History more evident, it seems. (Miss Porntip would fit in superbly.)

Yet the narration immediately subverts the notion of a distinctly articulated, post-historical peacetime by shifting from the list of influential

guests and their interactions to listing multiple possible scenarios of Pol Pot's whereabouts. The similar sentence structuring recalls the Gothic's dual obsession both with the uncanny double and with the concealment and revelation of secrets, as these repeated references to the architect of the Cambodian genocide surface like repressed, unspoken memories of a trauma, arguably rooted in Western colonialism, that haunts the new masters of empire: "Pol Pot lurks in his tent in the Cardamom mountains. Pol Pot lies ill of cancer in a Chinese hospital. Pol Pot waits like a fat tiger in a suite in the Erewan Hotel in Bangkok. Pol Pot has 40,000 armed men. Pol Pot is dead. Chinese whispers. The world goes round" (p. 76). Juxtapositions of competing "Good Time" and "Bad Time" realities emphasize the notion of colonial and wartime trauma not as an event with a discrete beginning and end but instead as a non-linear, invasive presence with which the peacetime enjoyed by the West is intimately intertwined. The experience of the distant violence of the Khmer Rouge regime becomes, for those in Liz's circle, "a not-fully-conscious awareness" that, like the image on a television screen, "flare[s] up and flicker[s] out" (Favret 2010, p. 29).

This resurfacing of the trauma of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime follows the Gothic convention of the return of a repressed past, manifested in the sudden irruption of the "hidden and dangerous" (Gampel 2000, p. 49) knowledge of how European imperialism is tied up in instances of collective trauma that are represented as discrete events having taken place in distinct temporal and spatial spheres. Such a recognition demands a movement away from "the attempt to construct the other as object of knowledge," a process in which the guests of the Archaeological Commission's dinner party engage with abandon, towards an empathic response that requires "listen[ing] to the other as if it were a self, neither to punish nor to acquit" (Spivak 2012, p. 374). This type of empathic response constitutes, according to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "an interruption of the epistemological" (2012, p. 374) and is analogous to the turn in trauma fiction away from the conventions of realism towards the emotional response emphasized by the Romantic tradition. As this scene demonstrates and as the continuing, changing reactions to Stephen's package make more and more evident, the novel's use of Gothic convention shatters the safe boundary between viewer (reader) and victim that the screen, image, and page provide, even as these media propose to connect the two. Stephen's package initiates a breakdown in the distance maintained by the television screen between Liz and the far-away violence she has

been viewing. Through a Gothic preoccupation with the sublime, the threshold to the numinous world, and the abject, *The Gates of Ivory* reconfigures Liz's spectatorial relationship to the violence of the Khmer Rouge regime into an experience of witnessing that calls for an acknowledgement of moral responsibility for the Other.

The sudden, unexpected arrival of Stephen's package on Liz's doorstep constitutes a Gothic intervention, disrupting the comfortable barriers between viewer and victim of trauma constructed by Liz's use of media screens to shape her detached relationship to distant violence. Instead, the bewildering, jumbled, foreign contents of the package demand recognition of the Other as self rather than as an object of knowledge. The package accomplishes this shift in Liz's perspective by way of a number of characteristically Gothic strategies that replicate on the level of the novel's structure the experience of trauma as an extra-rational event. Liz, who tries to read the contents of the package as a text, is thus made to feel (like the readers focusing through her consciousness) something of the traumatic impact of the Cambodian genocide through the package's dual Gothic-traumatic effect on the narratives both of Stephen's journey and of the novel as a whole. Considered in the context of Freud's model of the consciousness-as-membrane (and the corresponding metaphor of the screen as barrier to feeling), the package functions as an example of that class of stimuli which "are so strong that they break through the protective shield" (2016, p. 27), or, in Caruth's terms, become a "wound inflicted … upon the mind," a "breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world" (1996, p. 3, 4).

The package bombards Liz (and readers) with excessive levels of statistics and imagery depicting losses of human life due to war in a way that follows the sublime, which has been a consistent feature in Gothic literature ever since Burke's initial theorization of that, which in literature and art, leads to the overwhelming sense of awe, wonder, and, of particular interest to the Gothic, terror. To recall Burke, "[w]hatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime" (2008, p. 33). Burke sees value in the visceral responses to representations that dwell not in order and beauty, but rather in the chaotic and extra-rational. His theory of the sublime connects with literary trauma theory in that it suggests that the sheer immeasurability of the so-called

terrible object leads to a kind of rupture in the viewer's ability to fully assimilate it, much in the same way that Caruth's model of trauma concerns "not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known" (1996, p. 6). Since Burke's original definition, more recent theorizations of the sublime have strengthened its aesthetic amenability to trauma fiction as a genre. Arnold Berleant, for example, elaborates the notion of the "negative sublime" to describe events whose scope and intensity are "beyond conception, both morally and aesthetically" (2009). Berleant's connection of moral with aesthetic unthinkability allows for the concept to be applied to events like acts of terrorism, which "elude meaningful quantitative determination" and demand a mode of representation that acknowledges

> their moral and aesthetic incommensurability, indeed, their very inconceivability. Perhaps the only concept that can fully categorize them is the negative sublime. Like the aesthetic, the sublime is not necessarily a positive determination but a mode of experience. Hence to call such acts of terrorism the negative sublime is not an oxymoron but the recognition of negativity whose enormity cannot be encompassed in either magnitude or force. (Berleant 2009)

Berleant's notion of an immeasurable moral and aesthetic negativity connects to Freudian models of traumatic memory as inherently aporetic (or defined by the lack of registration of the event at the time of its occurrence) while his linking together of the aesthetic and the moral echoes trauma fiction's core ethical imperative, making the negative sublime particularly amenable, then, to mimicking the forms and symptoms of trauma in a work of trauma fiction.

The presence of the negative sublime within *The Gates of Ivory* conveys the horrors of the Cambodian genocide, while simultaneously reproducing its traumatic impacts, namely, its capacity to elude the full grasp of witnesses. Unlike the statistics and (often censored) images of wounded bodies presented in controlled doses by the newspaper page and television screen, which, in Freudian terms, constitute the membrane through which external stimuli in the form of distant violence are allowed selective entry into the consciousness of the viewer, the package from Stephen bombards its recipients (Liz and readers) with excessive amounts of raw data. In

doing so, the package presents a counterpoint to the edited atrocity stories that are offered up for viewers' consumption morning and evening.[7]

The novel reproduces traumatic impacts by including long paragraphs that read like exhaustive, itemized lists of gruesome atrocities. No explicit appeal is made to reader empathy; rather, these passages rely on tallying up disturbing images in a blasé mode that appears designed to shock. In contrast to their graphic subject matter, the tone of these passages is flat and bureaucratic, resulting in a disparity between the disturbing content and the offhand tone with which it is conveyed, emphasizing the institutional nature of many of the examples of violence these lists enumerate. A notable example emerges almost immediately from Liz's perusal of Stephen's bundle of Cambodian documents. The first document, a booklet marked "atrocity stories" containing a litany of traumatic events apparently drawn from a history textbook, lists pages enumerating the dead not only in Pol Pot's Cambodia but in dozens of armed conflicts over a vast historical and geographical scale, listed in such a way as to reduce human life merely to what Liz calls "the hostile counting house of history" (Drabble 1991, p. 140). Referring to the extermination of indigenous populations in the Belgian Congo, for example, Stephen dryly records in one sample passage that

"between 12 and 32 million" died there…. He has also noted the twentieth-century deaths of 800,000 Armenians, 6 million Jews, about 3 million in Bangladesh, some 20 million in the labour camps of the Soviet Union, 2 million in Vietnam, and between 1 and 3 million in Cambodia. In China, during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, it is estimated that between 20 and 80 million died. (p. 140)

The list goes on to juxtapose the large number of deaths with weapons-related statistics (such as the number of explosives dropped by the United States on Vietnam between 1964 and 1974) alongside such comparatively mundane details as the variety and amounts of food served to troops during the Vietnam War. This juxtaposition violates the "hierarchical logic" of narrative (Kamboureli 2013, p. 90): the cataloguing of statistics separated by commas with no pause for contextualization (even on Liz's

[7] The contrast between the "raw material" of trauma and the final, often sanitized, image is one that will return later in relation to Pat Barker's *Double Vision* via the raped and mutilated body of a girl found by the novel's protagonist, war reporter Stephen Sharkey, in a Sarajevo stairwell.

part) generates an overwhelming "syntactical swiftness" (p. 91) that reflects the degree to which trauma exceeds and disrupts narrative capabilities.

By collapsing the sheer volume of loss of human life into such proximity with the everyday banalities of food and drink consumption, Stephen's catalogue of death-statistics presents the information as the "unassimilated" matter of trauma (Caruth 1996, p. 4).[8] Liz's response to the sheer unfathomability of the list's "bureaucratic accountability" (Drabble 1991, p. 140) is, predictably, one of terror, reflecting her own inability to assimilate the information with which she is confronted. Her reaction is marked by an absolute rejection of the language used in the package's documents to account for the unaccounted-for:

> The words "between," "about" and "some" are all underlined in red ink. And with reason, thinks Liz. '*Between* 12 and 32 million killed' is a phrase that cannot exist. '*Between* 20 and 80 million'? I mean, are you *serious*? Do you call this *language*? What kind of history, what kind of mathematics is this, what has happened to all those spare tens of millions? Unnumbered, unburied, will they haunt the earth for ever, will they ever find a resting place? Do they not jostle us, do they not stifle us, are we not kept awake at nights by their squeaks and gibbering batlike cries? (p. 140, original emphasis)

Liz's bewilderment at the catalogue's attempt to coldly measure the emotionally and ethically immeasurable registers both the moral and the aesthetic incommensurability of war and genocide as instances of the negative sublime: events that conjure in Liz's mind the Gothic image of war victims as undead "batlike" creatures that "haunt" the living.

In addition to statistics, the list contained within Stephen's package also deploys excessive amounts of grotesque imagery by way of stories featuring all manner of raped, murdered, and mutilated bodies drawn from Ho Chi Minh's writings for *Le Paria*. These show the same resistance to sense-making narrativization as the previous statistics did; they are enumerated once again in bureaucratic language, but presented in a way that exceeds the controlled flow of the measured doses of atrocities routinely delivered to "Good Time" homes as daily and nightly news items. This time it is not Stephen's voice but that of the intrusive

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[8] The notion of trauma as "unassimilated matter" is supported by van der Kolk's study (outlined in Chap. 1) of the anatomical changes to the brain of victims who have suffered traumatic events.

narrator that condenses and decontextualizes the stories, extracting their most gruesome images, presenting them with minimal context, and cynically inviting those "squeamish about atrocities" to "skip them, if you wish" (p. 142):

> They feature rapes, thefts, disembowelments, floggings, raw flesh, amputations, desecrations, firing squads. The French are the villains, the Annamese the innocent victims. In one incident, soldiers rape two women and an eight-year-old girl, then, 'weary', murder them, while they roast an old man alive at a wood fire. They cut off the girl's finger to take a ring, and her head to take a necklace. (p. 143)

The reports continue, and similar images will reappear again and again in stories recounted to Stephen by those whom he meets in the Cambodian border camps, always confronting the reader with brutal, minimally contextualized violence. In one harrowing passage detailing the origin of Stephen's atrocity-stories notebook, Stephen records a week's worth of the "survival stories" recounted to him by inhabitants of one of the camps (p. 148). These include "[t]he mother who crouches silent in the night and kills her baby lest it cry out and reveal her and its brother's hiding place," "[t]he woman who lies as dead beneath the corpses of her family, then staggers out at dead of night to a life of eternal night," "[t]he child who has lost mother, father, siblings, all, on its way to the camp, who stares at Stephen with fixed eyes and a snotty nose and says one word, 'Chuoy!', like a dull record. 'Chuoy! Chuoy! Chuoy!' it repeats, without expression (It means 'Help, help, help')," "[t]he one-legged man who trod on a mine and crawled bleeding and delirious for days to safety," "[t]he rape victim left for dead," and "the man forced to dig his own grave and then buried up to his neck and left in the hot sun to die. There are many such stories. Stephen does not know whether they better illustrate the ingenuity or the monotony of human cruelty" (p. 149).

Again the information is catalogued paratactically (although this time a full stop separates individual images, producing an effect not of syntactical swiftness, but of repeated blunt impacts) and with minimal contextualization. The result is a "piling-up" of atrocities, whose excess and immediacy brings the experience of wartime trauma from a distant background experience to one that demands Liz's whole attention. As Caruth writes,

> what returns to haunt the trauma victim in Freud's primary example of trauma … is not just any event but, significantly, the shocking and unexpected occurrence of an accident. The example of the train accident—the accident from which a person walks away apparently unharmed, only to suffer symptoms of the shock weeks later—most obviously illustrates, for Freud, the traumatizing shock of a commonly occurring violence. (1996, p. 6)

The excess with which the package's contents overwhelm both Liz and readers mimics the shocking and unexpected nature of traumatic occurrence: the piling up of statistical and visual representations of atrocity results not in comprehension, but rather, its lack,[9] prompting Liz's initial rejection of the very language used to describe them and delaying full assimilation of the events conveyed until much later in the text (when, for example, Liz meets Mme Savet Akrun in the Thai-Cambodian border camp). By mimicking the tendency of trauma to defy comprehension in this way, the novel's negative sublime rejects an epistemological view of the experience of the Other in favour of an ethical one, opening up the possibility of reconfiguring the relationship between viewer and victim as one of empathic identification rather than passive spectatorship.

The central question for Liz, then, as well as for the readers who inhabit her point of view, seems to be just how to respond, especially when what one witnesses evades full comprehension. Tellingly, Liz experiences both a "deep resistance" (p. 22) to reading the contents of the package—she goes as far as to search for her name among the papers, hoping its absence will release her from whatever "obligation" Stephen has "laid upon her" (p. 7)—and a simultaneous, undeniable recognition of the finger bones it contains "as kin" (p. 8). This cognitive dissonance indicates the package's role in initiating a realization of what Caruth describes as "the way in which one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound" (1996, p. 8). The terror that these enumerations and images of war casualties elicit in Liz is of the kind theorized by Ann Radcliffe as "a source of the sublime" (2000, p. 168), distinguished from the "ambivalence" of horror by its capacity to "develop a heightened moral state in the reader" (2000, p. 69). Chapter 2 argued that *London Fields* operates within the realm of

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[9] Giorgio Agamben describes the same "non-coincidence between facts and truth, between verification and comprehension" in relation to the Holocaust (2002, p. 13).

horror, producing a state of moral and representational paralysis in Samson that is symptomatic of his inability to imagine himself out of existence. In *The Gates of Ivory*, multiple societal screens would seem to produce the same sort of paralysis, allowing viewers like Liz to maintain a posture of non-implication, while consuming the myriad atrocity stories that flicker on the television and appear in newspapers with clockwork regularity. But the tangibility of the items in the package from Stephen spurs Liz to action in a way that is analogous to the moral response which, Radcliffe argues, the sublime elicits. Rather than trivialize the glut of human deaths it details, the excess produced by Stephen's parcel is a call to moral action (and indeed spurs Liz, finally, to travel in search of Stephen herself).

Like *London Fields* (and as with each of the novels discussed in this book), *The Gates of Ivory*, by way of the package from Stephen, presents a personal manifestation of collective trauma, seemingly in order to offer an alternative to the feeling of "present absence" that derives from the high level of mediation characterizing the contemporary Western subject's experience of such trauma. The narrative of personal trauma contained in Stephen's package (much like that of Samson's undisclosed childhood trauma and current terminal illness, as well as that of Nicola Six's advance knowledge of her own murder) is intertwined with the collective trauma of the Cambodian genocide (corresponding, in the case of *London Fields*, to the threat of total nuclear annihilation). The same pattern of the personal narrative of trauma encapsulating a larger collective one is a common one among works of contemporary British trauma fiction: in *Atonement*, the false rape accusation against Robbie connects to World War II by way of the mandatory service that makes up part of his sentence; in *Double Vision*, the image of a raped and murdered girl encountered by reporter Stephen Sharkey while covering the Yugoslav Wars haunts him and poisons his relationship with his partner Justine; and in *Never Let Me Go*, the clones' art acts as personal testimony designed to stir sympathy in viewers as a means of resistance to their society's programme of mandatory organ donation. In each of these novels, the narrative of personal trauma serves as a vehicle of testimony for the narrative of collective trauma and, as such, offers to readers an opportunity for empathic connection (thus fulfilling what Caruth, Felman and Laub, and others identify as trauma fiction's ethical project).

However, as in these other novels, the opportunity for an empathic encounter between victim and witness that Stephen's package offers ultimately cannot overcome the barriers that representation erects in the

mind of the witness (recalling, for example, Samson's God-like narration and his inability/unwillingness to rewrite Nicola's fate despite his claims to empathy). As with Briony Tallis's "monstrous" characterization of Robbie in *Atonement*, Stephen Sharkey and Kate Frobisher's use of the Gothic tropes to stereotype and exploit others in *Double Vision*, and Kathy H's strategic harnessing of the uncanny in *Never Let Me Go*, Gothic convention in *The Gates of Ivory* reveals that Liz's response to the package's call to action is not an unqualified success. Rather, the package exposes within Liz a number of Gothic anxieties that render her response to its empathic possibilities ambivalent at best. Liz's ability to identify empathically with the atrocity stories contained in the package is impeded by an anxious desire to maintain the boundary between viewer and viewed. For the novel's British characters, the ability to maintain a posture of non-implication in the violence they consume in media reports depends on their maintaining geographical and temporal distance between the everyday ("Good Time") and the realities of the violence happening elsewhere ("Bad Time") despite the semblance of proximity that mass media affords. The desire to consume narratives of suffering only extends as far as the viewers' capacity to convince themselves either that this suffering is inevitable (as Fukuyama's theory of the end of history would suggest), or that token gestures of empathy (like Liz's annual charity donation to Oxfam)[10] are sufficient to maintain the separation between Good and Bad Time. With multiple societal screens as barrier between the two, allowing the viewer to act as spectator rather than witness, the traumatic impact of distant violence is effectively abjected from the realm of everyday experience, becoming, to recall Kristeva's definition of the abject, "the object jettisoned out of" the "boundary" (p. 69) between Good and Bad Time that the television screen, the newspaper page, the camera lens, or the aid poster provides. And yet, "from its place of banishment," the abject materiality of wartime "does not cease challenging its master" (p. 2). The call to action that the package represents lays bare Liz's anxious desire to maintain a spectatorial distance that absolves her of responsibility for what she views: a desire that manifests itself in the type of threshold anxiety that is a hallmark of the Gothic tradition.

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[10] Liz also, it is noted, "very occasionally, and against her better judgment, allow[s] herself to be moved to particular donation by a particular appeal for a particular catastrophe" (Drabble 1991, p. 24).

The novel's preoccupation with the crossing of boundaries is evident in the titular metaphor; quoting Homer's *Odyssey*, the novel's epigraph points out that dreams reach us by crossing one of two thresholds: those that come through the Gates of Ivory "deceive us with false images," but those that come through the Gates of Horn "speak plainly of what could be and will be" (Griffin 1998, b. XIX, p. 564, qtd in Drabble 1991, epigraph). In her introduction to the Gothic in contemporary literature and art, Gilda Williams emphasizes the disruptive power of the Gothic, even defining the genre in terms of being "more atmospheric than neatly defined" (2007, p. 14). For Williams, the Gothic rests on a profound concern with the transgression of boundaries. She argues that "[a]lways present in the Gothic is this: two things that should have remained apart—for example, madness and science; the living and the dead; technology and the human body; the pagan and the Christian; innocence and corruption; the suburban and the rural—are brought together, with terrifying consequences" (2007, p. 14). In the case of Drabble's novel, Stephen's package is the key to breaking through the narratives that hold the spectator (i.e., Liz) at a remove from distant violence, as well as in a position of moral stagnation. Societal screens, in addition to symbolizing the Freudian psychic apparatus that shields the consciousness from external stimuli, also symbolize the threshold that Liz must cross to travel from "Good Time" into "Bad Time" to try to retrieve Stephen. These screens are the gates of ivory, the novel's central image, through which, according to Homer, "false images" pass. Liz's decision (after much hesitation) to try to travel to Cambodia in search of Stephen enacts Aguirre's spatial model of the Gothic as crossing a threshold in a departure from a rational, intelligible everyday into the numinous. In this case, Liz's journey to Southeast Asia in an attempt to get to Cambodia signifies an entry into both the literal landscape of trauma (corresponding to Aguirre's definition of the numinous as the world of the sublime, the terrifying, and the chaotic), and into Stephen's representations of this region as an Orientalized, hallucinatory dream world. Liz's journey, then, is about breaching the boundary between representation and the raw materiality of trauma. So, varying from the deployment of this spatial trope in *London Fields* as a symbol of the aporia at the heart of traumatic experience, *The Gates of Ivory* uses this trope instead to signify the breaching of the safe boundary that the viewer of mediated violence anxiously seeks to maintain.

But just as Samson's dreams in *London Fields* present alternate realities that undermine the validity of his memory, causing him, as well as readers,

to doubt his own narrative, so the contents of Stephen's package serve a similar function, offering dreamlike visions of Cambodia and Southeast Asia to which the novel's London plot acts as frame narrative. Much as Samson's dream spaces call the rational world into question, mimicking the inaccessibility of the victim's experience of trauma, Stephen's package disrupts the linear temporality of the plot of *The Gates of Ivory*, introducing an element of belatedness that mimics the structure of traumatic memory in Liz, who only ever has access to parts of the story of Stephen's whereabouts in the years after he has last made any contact with his London acquaintances. Aguirre's assertion that the threshold, borrowing from Kristeva's theory of the abject, is "part of the other" (2008, p. 5) and liminalizes ordinary space in order to highlight "its numinosity and its terror" (2008, p. 14) both reaffirms Favret's theory of wartime as part of the background of everyday existence and reconfigures it slightly, forcing the uncomfortable realization that distinctions between London's "Good Time" and Cambodia's "Bad Time" cannot be maintained—at least not morally.

This loss of distinction is reflected in the way the contents of Stephen's package disrupt the structure of the novel itself. The overarching portion of the narrative connected to London is linear, detailing in chronological order its start with Liz's receipt of the package at her London home, her resulting decision to travel through Thailand and Vietnam in her efforts to reach Cambodia in her search for Stephen, and her return home at the end of the novel to organize a memorial service, having discovered that Stephen has been missing in Cambodia for years and is presumed dead. Disruptively intertwined within this overarching narrative, however, is Stephen's story: fragmented, incomplete, and told with a mixture of fact (insofar as the voice of the omniscient narrator can be taken as reliable) and fiction (in the form of the 'purple prose' passages making up what seems to be Stephen's unfinished novel). Stirred into action by the arrival of Stephen's bewildering package, but armed with only fragmentary and partial knowledge of how to find out what has befallen Stephen, Liz undergoes the experience of trauma as a break in the mind's experience of time, forever experienced as a belated event (and readers are forced to share her perplexed point of view).

Thus the concepts of "Good Time" and "Bad Time" can no longer be viewed as existing in separate spheres, and the blurring of these time frames is emphasized on numerous occasions. If Liz originally represents one who merely stands "by a bridge over a river on the border between

Thailand and Cambodia" (which, eventually, she physically does) to peer from the safe space of the "little town of Aranyaprathet, bristling with aerials and stuffed with Good Time merchandise, connected by road and rail and telephone and post office and gossip and newspapers and banking systems with all the Good Times of the West" towards the disturbing "Bad Time of Cambodia," she transforms (as do the readers sharing her narrative perspective) during the novel into one who must surrender the illusion of completely separate, self-contained spheres and acknowledge that "Good Time and Bad Time coexist" (Drabble 1991, p. 3). Indeed, the structural disruption enacted by the contents of the package emphasizes the coexistence of these two time frames in a way that mirrors the novel's frequent, jarring juxtapositions of everyday life for Liz and her London circle with the wartime reality of the Khmer Rouge regime (such as the previously discussed cocktail party scene that unfolds alongside the multiple possible whereabouts of Pol Pot).

It would appear, then, that the arrival of the package initiates the breakdown of time in Liz's own mind (as conveyed to readers by the focus of the omniscient narrator). This breakdown most conspicuously manifests itself in Liz's dreams once she arrives in Southeast Asia; these dreams, like those the narrator has earlier suggested "suffuse and intermingle through a thin membrane," blur Stephen's subjective reality with Liz's own, often featuring gruesome images of dead and mutilated bodies (p. 78). The sense of belatedness in learning what happened to Stephen that readers are made to experience along with Liz is a further instance of the novel's mimicry of the experience of trauma. Her entry into the previously distant world of Southeast Asia renders her no longer a detached spectator but a potential empathic participant in the traumatic experience of the Cambodian genocide, as well as in whatever fate has befallen Stephen. By enacting the Gothic convention of the found narrative, which initiates Liz's entry into the numinous world of the sublime, the terrifying, and the chaotic, the package functions, as in the example of Samson's dreams, "to destabilize assumptions as to the physical, ontological, or moral order of the cosmos" (Aguirre 2008, p. 6). In the case of Drabble's novel, this destabilization occurs on the level of Liz's sense of ethical non-obligation, producing a sense of culpability as the "terrifying consequenc[e]" (Williams 2007, p. 14) of the blurring together of the novel's two temporal-spatial zones.

However, while motivated primarily by ethical obligation (however begrudgingly accepted), Liz's efforts to breach the protective barrier of

her society's screens for filtering news of distant atrocities are not a resounding success. Despite tapping into her social circle's many connections, including "'Old Boys out there'" (Drabble 1991, p. 273), Liz cannot actually get into Cambodia, having to make do with following Stephen's trail as far as she can in Thailand and Vietnam instead. Ironically, the most useful contact she encounters during her journey turns out to be Miss Porntip, the very figure that had earlier inspired derision in Liz and Stephen's other friends: "They all laugh merrily at the notion of Miss Porntip, and decide that with a name like that she cannot but be a figment of the imagination. A fiction, a bad joke…. At the introduction of Miss Porntip, the evening disintegrates further, concentration dissipates, frivolity prevails" (pp. 269–70). On her flight to Bangkok, Liz again briefly thinks of Miss Porntip dismissively: "Liz Headland does not believe that Miss Porntip is a real person" (p. 319), so she later has to conceal "her astonishment" when she is given Miss Porntip's name as the best person to help her: "very useful contact, very powerful person" (p. 348). Perhaps it is not completely surprising that Liz's face-to-face encounters with some of the primary victims of the Khmer Rouge regime do not bring about an empathic identification of the type Caruth predicts, and which we might expect from a work of trauma fiction. Rather, much as *London Fields* calls into question trauma theory's assumption of the redemptive power of narrative in Samson's omniscient, yet morally ambivalent narration/authorship (an issue that will return in Chap. 4 in relation to *Atonement* and its protagonist, Briony Tallis), Drabble's novel challenges the validity of the assumption of victim-witness identification that underlies much of literary trauma theory.

Liz is offered the opportunity to recognize the Other-as-self—to identify empathically with the victim of trauma and, in doing so, to bear witness—in her encounter with Mme Savet Akrun, victim of the Pol Pot regime and inhabitant of the "Site Ten" resettlement camp on the Thai-Cambodian border. This opportunity is effectively "troped" by way of the female body as a threshold, which, like the package, holds the potential to link together the Cambodian and London narratives, this time via a shared experience of female embodiment. Following the Gothic convention of the unspeakable taboo, the trope of menstrual blood functions as a hidden or unspeakable point of connection that links together the novel's female characters across geographical boundaries. The novel's forthright depiction of menstruation was a point of contention between Drabble and her male editor, who, according to Drabble, "didn't like that bit. He said, 'Can we

take this out?' I said 'No. It's very important. Leave it where it is'" (Drabble 2016). Drabble makes a point of including frank discussion of menstruation, while also emphasizing its taboo nature; for example, in the Displaced Persons camps of the Thai-Cambodian border, UN aid worker Helen Anstey briefs Stephen about "Women's Sickness," characterized by the cessation of menstruation as an apparent psychophysiological response to the trauma of displacement (1991, p. 128). In one border-camp scene, Savet Akrun's traumatized memories of her time as a Khmer Rouge prisoner commingle aspects of everyday feminine life and those of brutal death: remembering "waiting for the thick dark metallic gouts of blood that she knows will soon be loosed from her" to "fall neatly to the dry earth" mixes with her memory of "the jungle and the sound of spade on skull" (p. 153). "The Khmer Rouge are Green People," and the novel presents women's loss of dignity due to lack of access to sanitary pads and towels as its own gender-specific trauma, as Mme Akrun also remembers: "Menstrual blood runs down the legs of women who once took a butterfly pride in their appearance. Women smell. Women choose to cease to menstruate" (p. 153).

Following this imagery, the narration immediately jumps to the present and a London scene in which Hattie Osborne discusses the dangers of toxic shock with Polly Piper, a woman with a career in sanitary protection who champions the tampon as "the liberator of womankind" (p. 156). This juxtaposition between "Good Time" and "Bad Time" experiences of menstruation connects the novel's Cambodian and London narratives, rendering the legacy of the abuses of the Khmer Rouge as immediate despite the temporal and geographical disconnect. However, the novel does not present in the trope of menstruation an unqualified symbol of female solidarity: Polly's disregard of the tampon's ecological impacts reveals her implication in the Western neoliberal project that erases the experiences of women in the developing world (with her six-foot frame and navy power suit, she is presented as something of a patriarchal figure in her own right), complicating any attempt to bridge the gulf of experience between these "Good Time" and "Bad Time" women through embodied female experience alone.

Similarly, the novel sets up this potential for connection only to undermine it yet again by having Liz mirror Savet Akrun's experience while in Hanoi. Finding herself unexpectedly menstruating and unable to purchase any sanitary products, Liz is forced to use a single ancient tampon, squashed and decidedly unsanitary looking, retrieved from the bottom of

her old purse, for days on end. As she meets with various government officials in her attempt to acquire a travel visa for Cambodia and one minister explains that there is no record of Stephen Cox's whereabouts, Liz's private doubts about the reliability of the tampon eclipse all other collective concerns:

> She is worrying not about death but about leakage. She continues to worry about it, as she is passed from department to department. It is unreal, it is ridiculous. She cannot take in what is said to her, she cannot follow her interpreter. She is bleeding…. The entire male world of communism, Marxist-Leninism, inflation, American imperialism, rice production, exchange mechanisms, statistics, hostages, the CIA, the SAS and the KGB, the Chinese, the KPNLF, Sihanouk, and Hun Sen, war, death, and Ho's marble mausoleum dissolve and fade before the bleeding root of her body, impaled on its grey-white stump. Woman-being, woman-life, possess her entirely. Shames and humiliations, triumphs and glories, birth and blood. Let armies fight and die, let peoples starve. She hopes that the seat of her skirt will not be stained when she rises. (p. 379)

If anything can resist the "Good Time" inevitability of the End of History, or the "Bad Time" notion of a patriarchal wartime society, it is, apparently, the experience of female embodiment; the vulnerability of the female body during menstruation would seem to connect Liz and Savet Akrun across geographical, temporal, and economic boundaries. And yet the novel stops short of suggesting solidarity by way of the shared experience of "woman-being" and "woman-life" (as the horrifyingly selfish concluding note of Liz's thoughts suggests). Conversely, Liz's menstruation erects a barrier to empathic connection in its own right, leading her at that moment to feel that not only Stephen's unfortunate fate, but also the fate of millions at the hands of genocidal violence is somehow "unreal." The way the passage builds on the idea of female experience as an act of resistance and solidarity against patriarchal abuses only to deflate the idea entirely reflects the overall pattern of the novel's usage of the threshold as a figurative space through which Liz is offered the opportunity to connect with the traumatized Other only to fail to do so, repeatedly.

Nowhere is this failure to connect empathically with the victim of trauma more evident than in Liz's eventual meeting with Mme Akrun upon arrival at the Thai-Cambodian border camp known as Site Ten. Liz had first encountered Mme Akrun as a representation, through a newspaper photograph contained in Stephen's package showing a woman in an "erect

and dignified" pose, "her hands folded on her lap … [h]er expression, adopted perhaps for the camera, [one] of grave suffering" (p. 22). The accompanying caption read, "'Where is my son?'" (p. 22). Liz's "displaced tremor of feeling" towards this image of a mother searching for her long-lost son (Mitra) is immediately paired with assumptions of Mme Akrun's perpetual victimhood: she wonders whether Mme Akrun had "offered herself for this photo opportunity in a sacrificial spirit, as an emblematic figure for her nation" (p. 23). The representation of Mme Akrun's personal narrative is at least partially responsible for breaking Liz out of her initial ethical paralysis (Liz, "until this moment, had not given much thought to the displaced people and refugees of the world" [p. 23]). But when Liz finally meets Mme Akrun, she is surprised—even disappointed—to find out that the sorrowful mother "looks less sad. Liz had half expected her to recite her sad story, but she does not" (p. 334). Liz goes on to wonder, "[w]here is the obsessional, grieving mother, whose image she had constructed from the photograph, from Stephen's jottings, from her own instincts?" (p. 336). Though Mme Akrun is likely suffering from PTSD—she has recurring dreams and frequent intrusive thoughts of "the thud of spade on skull" (p. 81) and "cannot speak" (p. 152) of her survival story to Stephen—she is not the long-suffering victim depicted in the newspaper clipping.

This meeting shatters Liz's assumptions, constructed entirely through the media, of Mme Akrun as perpetually suffering victim. The statement by the narrator that "Time has moved on, even here" (p. 334), registers both this shattering and the failure of the two women to connect through testimony (leaving Liz with a perpetually belated sense of the trauma of the Cambodian genocide). Though Liz is seemingly drawn to Mme Akrun by their shared experience of motherhood (she is at least moved enough by the thought of Mme Akrun's missing son to travel to meet her), the novel once again stops short of fulfilling its promise of empathic connection between victim and witness, leaving readers only with the unresolved question of "[i]n what time-scale do these two women now confront one another? … Both exist. Both inhabit time. Can they ever meet? Are such meetings possible?" (p. 140). The complexity of Savet Akrun's character defies Liz's simplistic impressions: she is not the one-dimensional "Mater Dolorosa" (p. 154) Liz has imagined, but is rife with shifting ethical and moral ambiguities of her own, including the selfish joy she feels knowing that her younger son, Kem, "can [now] be found at any time of night or day" and "can no longer wander off in bad company"

because the former resistance fighter has been left an amputee, presumably after stepping on a landmine (p. 341). In the meeting with Liz, the static image of Konstantin's prize-winning photograph, perpetually proclaiming that "life can give me no joy until I find my son" (p. 26), has been replaced with a woman who has found herself upon Kem's return "reborn as Mother," however problematically (p. 342). Liz's unsettling encounter with the actual Mme Akrun suggests a failure to connect empathically with the victim of trauma: Mme Akrun does not conform to the identity Liz has constructed for her based on the image of the charity posters and newspaper articles, and Liz's resulting embarrassment keeps her from inquiring about Mme Akrun's missing son, Mitra, thus denying herself the opportunity to truly bear witness to the trauma that Mme Akrun has suffered.

Liz's unexpected menstruation in Hanoi, which occurs not long after her meeting with Mme Akrun, is due, she supposes, to "shock … or the heat" (p. 377), and in fact leads to the literal toxic shock which puts Liz in the hospital and ultimately results in her having to return home. It thus acts as a metaphor for the shock of a direct, personal encounter with the experiences of victims of the Khmer Rouge as detailed in Stephen's notes, and this shock precipitates Liz's retreat back into the work, family, and gossip that occupies her "Good Time." The interchange between Liz and Savet Akrun, who become linked by a form of shock, demonstrates Liz's move towards overcoming simple narratives peddled by media playing on viewer empathy often for selfish purposes (such as furthering the careers of photographers like Konstantin Vassiliou) and towards acknowledging the true horrors of collective violence rendered personal. In the disparity between Mme Akrun as "paper woman" (p. 140) and Mme Akrun the complex Other, demanding not knowledge, but empathy, we witness, again, the shattering of the protective but distorting screen that media accounts of distant violence afford the privileged viewer. However, Liz's almost immediate retreat from Cambodia when the news of Stephen's death finally reaches her (absolving her of responsibility towards him) signals a rejection of this dismantling and a retreat back into the role of passive spectator. Much like the moment in which Liz's fear of leakage surpasses her concern for anyone but herself, her toxic shock reveals a selfish vanity that cannot be breached: she cannot help but feel satisfied upon returning home that her illness has caused her to lose weight and that "through an effort of will in succeeding months [she] has not regained it" (p. 429), drawing admiration from friends. While the opportunity for

empathy is present, the call to action made, Liz is not the dependably responsive witness that trauma theory expects her to be. By turning this critical eye on Liz's failings in remaining a detached spectator and refusing the opportunity to become a genuinely empathic witness, Drabble's novel challenges its readers to assess their own relationship to the atrocity stories they consume.

The behaviour of the guests at Stephen's memorial service that marks the end of the novel suggests that the challenge to move beyond mere spectatorship of traumatic violence is never-ending. For example, the singing choir offers an image of a staggering inadequacy of response to distant violence, as the narrator details with biting cynicism:

> "Earth shall be fair, and all her folk be one!" conclude the choir and congregation, with a faltering unpractised note of heart-breaking optimism, extended equally to the toiling billions of China, to the Indian subcontinent, to the Americas, to the fragmenting empire of the Soviet Union, to the Iranians and the Inuit and the head-hunters of Irian Jaya and the whole stinking selfish murderous brutish greedy gazetteer of *National Geographic* folk colourful and colourless, rich and poor, oppressing and oppressed: in short to the whole four or five billion individuals that make up the population of the globe, of whom this ragged, tattered, fragmented, faithless gathering makes but a miserably inadequate representation. (p. 440)

The hymn's role as yet another numbing screen, in spite of the empathy it ostensibly conjures up, is evident in the response (or lack thereof) from the mourners: Hattie Osborne "dabs at her stained dress," Helen Anstey "yawns discreetly," Lord Filey "unwraps a throat sweet," Liz's ex-husband Charles "wonders if he will get a parking ticket," and Alix impatiently ponders what the congregants are "even *doing* here, in a *church*," and why they can't just "get on with the *next* thing" (p. 440, original emphasis). The scene marks a retreat into peacetime routines of everyday, and the narrator's word choice echoes the preoccupations of the Londoners before Liz ever departed for Cambodia: "Those guests who make a quick getaway from the leper church and arrive in St John's Wood before the traffic of London grinds to a halt are in a lenient mood. As far as they are concerned, civilization is doing just fine. They sip and munch and chatter…. This is a Good Time post-Memorial party" (p. 445). The narrator's tone in this scene is parodical in its lack of faith in the ability of Stephen's memorial service to serve as anything more than an inoculation against true

remembrance, empathy, or feeling. By ending on this note, the novel demonstrates that the duty of bearing witness is a far more monumental task than the ease of access to images and narratives of violence in the media suggests.

Contrasting with this scene is a chilling epilogue of sorts, which depicts Savet Akrun's still-missing son Mitra as an apocalyptic Last Man striding through a Cambodian forest, "girded not with a camera but with a cartridge belt," an image that mounts a challenge to Fukuyama's notion of the End of History and its exculpation of those on its "winning" side. Rather than "respond to the summons" of those who have used his image to their own end—the narrator ironically names Konstantin Vassiliou, Stephen Cox, Liz Headleand, the *Bangkok Post*; and "the charitable agency that used his mother's image to raise funds for its own purposes" among those who, along with his mother, have "invoked" Mitra—he "will march on, armed, blooded, bloodied, a rusty Chinese rifle at his back…. He grows and grows, he multiplies. Terribly, he smiles. He is legion. He has not been told that he is living at the end of history. He does not care whether his mother lives or dies. He marches on. He is multitudes" (p. 462). The narrator paints Mitra as Gothic, demonic double, one whose transcendence of space and time highlights both the uncertainty of a post-traumatic culture and political extremism's continued legacy beyond geographical and temporal borders. Here Drabble's own comments on the function of this image confirm its role as a symbol of resistance to the inevitability of Western capitalism as a global ideology:

> I foresaw that there would always be these revolutionary young men, even though Francis Fukuyama … told us that the end of history had come, implying that there would be no young rebels with guns. How wrong he was! It's just that I had placed them further east, and they're now in the Middle East, not the Far East, but I had this sense that it was never going to be appeased, that capitalism and revolution were forever at war. (Drabble 2016)

In the face of the apparent certainty and inevitability of Fukuyama's prediction, Drabble offers Mitra as a duplicitous embodiment of uncertainty, and promises only the continuation of the Khmer Rouge regime's traumatic aftermath, figured as but one iteration of the violence of ideology in which Fukuyama's vision of Western capitalism is shown to be implicated. This closing image constitutes the most chilling example of

doubling that occurs throughout the novel (most frequently in relation to the incantatory passages offering multiple possibilities for Pol Pot's whereabouts). Together, the multiplicity and simultaneity of possible outcomes for these two figures create a sense of the lasting impact of the collective trauma of the Cambodian genocide.[11]

Along with both Mitra and Pol Pot as demonic doubles who return in spite of attempts at erasure by Western capitalist triumphalism, not only do the Gothic conventions within Drabble's novel make the "absent presence" of wartime trauma felt in the lives of its characters—and readers—but also, by calling attention to the threshold anxiety that characterizes the contemporary, mediated experience of regarding trauma, these Gothic conventions place spectator-witnesses to distant violence on trial. The excess the novel employs to confront readers with the horrors of the Khmer Rouge regime contrasts sharply with the tightly controlled narratives peddled by the media through which the novel's London characters engage with distant violence. In so doing, *The Gates of Ivory* critiques the ways in which contemporary media serve not necessarily as a point of connection between victim and witness, but rather as a screen that turns witnessing into mere spectatorship. The package from Stephen serves as a Gothic found narrative that acts as the wound of the Other, which calls for an empathic, rather than epistemological, response. Stephen's package is the catalyst by which wartime experience ceases to be part of the background thrum of everyday modern life, becoming foregrounded and

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[11] The traumatic legacy of the Cambodian genocide, which carries an estimated death toll of 1.6 million, or 21% of the Cambodian population (Kiernan 2008, p. 458), lingers to this day. The Khmer Rouge Tribunal, established in 1997, continues to hold hearings for war crimes committed by top-level figures within the Khmer Rouge regime; however, concerns over the fading of the genocide from history are rife due to the "deadlocked" (Cohn 2003) status of the tribunals, which have led to only five indictments and three convictions in their twenty-year existence and which are plagued by accusations of corruption, "government interference," and "lack of public information over the investigations" (Wright 2017). Efforts to fight the loss of knowledge of the genocide and to preserve the memory of the victims of the Khmer Rouge are ongoing: in 1980, the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh opened on the site of the former Tuol Sleng prison; it is home to the identification photographs of many of the over 12,000 prisoners (Brewer 2015) who were imprisoned, tortured, and executed between 1975 and 1979. A selection of these photos formed part of an exhibition by the Royal Ontario Museum in 2012 entitled *Observance and Memorial: Photographs from S-21*. A similar exhibit can be found at the Landmine Museum outside Siem Reap, in which "photos of guards and victims are purposely mixed side by side in the exhibit without description in an attempt to show how the Cambodian people all suffered and were 'one' during the genocide whether victim or perpetrator" (Kislenko 2011).

demanding responsibility from Liz. By upending the moral order of Liz's London circle, the package forces Liz out of the "quintessential modern experience" of being "a spectator of calamities taking place in another country" (Sontag 2003, p. 18) so that she might move towards bearing witness to the testimony of trauma through forging an empathic connection with victims of trauma like Savet Akrun.

However, while the package initiates Liz's breaking of the boundary between London's "Good Time" and Cambodia's "Bad Time," the novel withholds from its readers the ideal of empathic connection that Caruth identifies. The temporal disruptions Stephen's narrative introduces do indicate that the boundary between wartime and peacetime is not as easily maintained as Fukuyama suggests, and the novel's use of menstruation as symbol of the abjection of embodied female experience would seem to offer Liz an opportunity for solidarity with Savet Akrun. But this breaching of boundaries does not lead to an unqualified identification between witness and victim, as Liz's encounter with Akrun and the subsequent metaphor of "toxic shock" hints might be possible. Rather, the novel's self-conscious narration, along with its use of the Gothic, a genre as much known for its role in distancing viewers psychologically from horror as it is for its role in articulating latent anxieties within its "mostly middle-class and Anglo" readership (Hogle 2002, p. 5), suggests that the very notion of trauma fiction as a literary mode capable of serving any meaningful ethical function is, perhaps, merely another all-too-convenient narrative absolving readers from true responsibility.

This is not to suggest that all attempts at empathic representation are doomed to failure, but rather that such attempts should be mindful of ethical pitfalls, especially in a Western text dealing in non-Western subject matter. Such a critique is important, given that the novel is itself the product of a trip made by Drabble to the Thai-Cambodian resettlement border camps. Adding a further layer of self-awareness to Drabble's project, this personal involvement problematizes the idea of trauma fiction as a potentially salvific genre by raising questions about authors' responsibility to the trauma they may use as "raw material" for their art. Housed at the Cambridge University Library is the Margaret Drabble archive, which contains several boxes of ephemera, notebooks, early drafts, and primary research materials for *The Gates of Ivory*. The experience of reading through these materials mirrors Liz's reading of Stephen's package. Indeed, it becomes clear from these materials that much of the novel (particularly Liz's journey) is based on Drabble's own travels

through Thailand and Vietnam while attempting to reach Cambodia, with locations like the New Trocadero Hotel (where Liz stays while in Bangkok) and characters like Simon Grunewald and Savet Akrun based on those encountered by Drabble herself.

Drabble's novel, then, is just as implicated as Stephen's in the use of the trauma of another as source material (Miss Porntip states she had just assumed that Stephen was back in London, "safely engaged on writing his best-seller Bad Time book" [1991, p. 349]). Highlighting this problematic process of representation is an excerpt from a Vietnam news bulletin detailing "two children with congenitally-absent eyes—another legacy of 2-4-5-T with which their mothers must have been affected during pregnancy" (Sharp 1987), a jarring image that is reworked as a "jumbled sequence" of documentary footage shown to Liz by Australian *Time* magazine journalist Jacqueline Lowe featuring "a mewing baby born without arms, and more horribly, more unexpectedly, a baby without eyes," the upper part of its head a "smooth blank sightless brow" (Drabble 1991, p. 392). By the time this passage is read, the original event has been buried under several layers of mediated transformation, from event, to bulletin report, to fictional—one might say Gothic—transfiguration (the fact that it is framed as documentary footage provides a still additional layer of mediation). In this enactment of the unlocalizability of the initial traumatic event, *The Gates of Ivory* might be said to partake in the very process it intends to critique, pointing to a need within trauma fiction for a rigorous self-questioning in relation to the ethical imperative on which it rests. This need comes to the fore in the following chapter on *Atonement*, which makes explicit the relationship between the work of trauma fiction and the raw traumatic material that informs it.

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Fading Into Unknowing: Gothic Postmemory in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*

"If I really cared so much about facts, I should have written a different kind of book" (McEwan 2001, p. 360). So the ageing Briony Tallis tells readers in the final pages of Ian McEwan's *Atonement*. While both *London Fields* and *The Gates of Ivory* exhibit a significant amount of metafictional awareness, *Atonement* is the first novel discussed here to combine metafiction with the Gothic to explicitly foreground the ethical issues present for writers seeking to produce an aestheticized representation of the trauma of another. In doing so, McEwan's novel foregrounds the tension between literature and testimony, raising important questions about the implications this tension has on the role of fiction in mediating our relationship to twentieth-century collective trauma. The novel's movement between past (protagonist Briony Tallis's World War II era coming of age) and present (1999, the year in which the seventy-seven-year-old Briony plans on publishing the novel based on the initial trauma she had witnessed as a child and its repercussions) calls attention to issues of memory and its reliability. However, the novel also links individual, or private, history (Briony's witness to the rape of her cousin Lola and false accusation of her neighbour, Robbie, of the crime) to collective, or public, history (Robbie's subsequent involvement in World War II), probing the relationship between apparently stable individual memory and collective, or cultural, trauma.

Atonement has been labelled a work of trauma fiction by J. Hillis Miller and Paul Crosthwaite, whose Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic readings of the text's treatment of trauma show how the initial traumatic event fits (or does not) into the narrative and psychological frames of reference of both

reader and text. For Caruth, these narrative and psychological frames of reference are inextricable from one another, since "literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relationship between knowing and not knowing. It is at this precise point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience and the language of literature meet" (1996, p. 3). These studies have shed much light on the Freudian model of traumatic memory that is palpable both in the novel's structure (which turns on a key metafictional revelation of Briony's authorship of the novel itself, prompting a return to the initial traumatic locus as described by Freud), and in the heavy Freudian undertones—as well as explicit references—that characterize Briony's testimony about the traumatic events in question. The role of genre, however, in Briony's narration of both personal and collective trauma and its lingering effects has yet to be tackled.

Certainly the novel's Gothic intertextuality has been mentioned in passing by critics who liken Briony to a modern iteration of Jane Austen's parodical Gothic heroine Catherine Morland (the association is to be expected given McEwan's epigraph, drawn from Austen's *Northanger Abbey*), but the link between the novel's evident participation in the Gothic genre and the trauma that lies at the heart of Briony's narration warrants further examination, especially considering the critical tradition of reading the Gothic as a vehicle that gives voice to otherwise unutterable anxieties. Given the novel's deeply self-reflexive treatment of the troubled link between narrative and (traumatic) memory, plus the well-established view of the Gothic both as a form intimately tied to Freudian psychoanalysis and as a sort of national literature for voicing collective anxieties haunting British society, the Gothic inflection that colours much of the first third of the novel seems an intentional act of meaning-making by which the traumatic events Briony witnesses as a child are subjected to literary convention. The use of trauma as raw material for a work of fiction (especially when the process of fictionalization enacts, whether intentionally or unintentionally, its own form of violence against those for whom it claims to speak) foregrounds the tension between fiction writing and testimony: a tension which can be linked to the dichotomy that subordinates supposedly unruly individual or communicative memory to an ostensibly more stable collective, or cultural, memory.[1]

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[1] Athanasios Anastasiadis's theorization of what he calls postmemorial relationships to collective trauma will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. In brief, he describes the process of historical transition from communicative memory, which is housed by first-hand witnesses to the event in question, to cultural memory, which is ostensibly more stable and mediated by institutions like libraries and archives.

That *Atonement* is concerned with the relationship between testimony and traumatic memory, the damaging impact of trauma on the process of narration, and the ethical role of the author-witness is clear upon examination of its structure and subject matter. The novel is divided into thirds: Part One, set in the English countryside in the years leading up to World War II, follows the young Briony Tallis, an imaginative though awkward preadolescent with a penchant for storytelling, and her witnessing of a sexual encounter between her older sister Cecilia and the family's gardener/handyman/protégé, Robbie Turner, which she mistakenly interprets as an assault. This misinterpretation of events leads Briony, later that night, to falsely accuse Robbie, whom she now believes to be a "maniac" (McEwan 2001, p. 119), of the rape of her cousin Lola, which she also witnesses. The true perpetrator, however, is Paul Marshall, a very rich friend of Briony's older brother Leon, who is home from university. Robbie is sent to jail for the crime but receives early release in exchange for active duty and participates in the battle of Dunkirk, the events of which are recounted in Part Two of the novel. Part Three details Briony's work as a London nurse tending to wounded soldiers, as well as her unsuccessful attempts to have her writing published. Briony, we learn, has been racked with guilt over her false accusation of Robbie, which she compensates for by throwing her whole being into her nursing work. She has fallen out of touch with Cecilia, though she reaches out to her after attending Paul and Lola's wedding, finally managing, at long last, to pay her a visit. Robbie, it seems, has survived the war and returned home to Cecilia, the star-crossed lovers finally reunited.

However, what little closure is provided by the terse meeting between the three main characters is briskly swept away by the revelation in the novel's final pages that the text we have been reading has in fact been authored by Briony, who suggests that she has not given readers the true story of Robbie and Cecilia's fates. The novel ends in London in 1999, with Briony about to turn seventy-seven and, she tells readers, in early-stage vascular dementia. She plans to have the novel published posthumously (when both Lola and Paul Marshall have died, so none of the event's major players will be present to dispute her narrative). Though Briony admits there can be "no atonement for God, or novelists," her declaration that "the attempt was all" (McEwan 2001, p. 371) decidedly invests some small modicum of redemption into the narrative act of letting her lovers live and uniting them at the end.

At first glance, *Atonement* may appear an odd choice for a study of the Gothic in McEwan's work; after all, he is known for his controversial participation in the genre's extremes in his earlier novels, for which he earned the nickname "Ian MacAbre." Reviewers have since claimed (sometimes with an air of disappointment) that the author has "mellowed," turning from his roots as a writer of contemporary Gothic tales that are, to put it in the words of one critic, "nasty, British, and short" (Pritchard 1998), to works displaying a greater degree of realism, metafiction, and, ultimately, literary merit.[2] While the author is still known for his appropriation of the conventions of genre fiction (e.g., *Sweet Tooth* [2012], which adopts the generic conventions of the spy novel), *Atonement* is best known for its imitation of the style of Virginia Woolf: for example, between nursing shifts Briony is seen reading Woolf's *The Waves*, a work which has a palpable, though arguably deleterious (and fortunately temporary) effect on her developing writing style, leading her to disparage character and plot as "quaint devices that belonged to the nineteenth century" (McEwan 2001, p. 281). In a further nod to Woolf, reviewer Peter Kemp reads the "disastrous roast meat dinner fed to sweltering guests" in Part One as a parody of the dinner scene featured in *To the Lighthouse* (2001). One should not be so hasty, however, to divorce McEwan from the Gothic tradition; the novel's dinner party owes at least as much to this tradition as it does to Woolf, and the scene is one example among many of the novel's participation in the Gothic.

What critics do agree upon, however, is the categorization of *Atonement* as a work of trauma fiction. As Paul Crosthwaite argues, *Atonement* seeks to capture the aporetic nature of traumatic memory and the crisis of representation it generates by evoking the Lacanian Real: Crosthwaite writes that "[i]f, as Jacques Lacan contends, the traumatic encounter with the Real opens up an incomprehensible and unsymbolizable void in experience, its occurrence is most effectively marked … in the act of disrupting and diverting realism's drive to mimetically delineate the world" (2009, p. 14). Crosthwaite notes how *Atonement* "often seems to aspire to a state of absolute verisimilitude, adopting a 'transparent' mimetic language that purports to convey the horror of war 'as it really was'" (p. 145), evoking by way of

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[2] McEwan's descriptive early nickname is explained in many critical discussions of his work, such as at literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/ian-mcewan. While most critics praise the maturity of his more recent fiction, others, perhaps distrustful of the bestseller status of *Atonement*, have gone so far as to dismiss the novel as mere "airport-fare" (Seal 2008).

example the "unadorned, simple, non-'literary'" descriptions of soldiers' war wounds as seen by Briony while tending to her many patients (p. 164). However, he suggests that the novel most effectively evokes the traumatic impact of war by way of narrative techniques that evoke the Real's resistance to symbolic representation through "evasion," "elision," "belatedness," and other techniques that move away from mimetic realism (p. 165). For Crosthwaite, any attempt the text makes to directly channel the Real

> inevitably fails, since, as Lacan insists, what marks the encounter with the Real is precisely that it is *not* experienced directly or immediately, but rather evades punctual registration. McEwan's novel is most effective in evoking the traumatic conditions of battle … when [its] mode of extreme 'realism' yields to forms of representation that are, ostensibly at least, more oblique. (p. 146, original emphasis)

Crosthwaite focuses mainly on how *Atonement* captures and reproduces Robbie's delayed processing of traumatic events witnessed on the battlefield, conveying the "peculiar incomprehensibility" (Caruth 1996, p. 58) of trauma and its consequent resistance to narration. This oscillation between mimetic and non-mimetic representation has significant implications to the question Crosthwaite poses as to "what kind of access members of [the post-war] generation might have to the devastating historical events of the 1940s"; he concludes that "the challenge of representing the war at the end of the century turns on a profound incompatibility between realism and the Real" (2009, p. 14). The revelation of Briony's authorship emerges from this incompatibility and responds to the resulting challenge of representing war from a postmemorial perspective. Crosthwaite argues that this moment of startling revelation registers the belatedness of Briony's personal trauma and transmits this experience to the reader; through the "initially unassimilable rupture" that the revelation of Briony's authorship causes, "which demands to be repeated before it can be integrated into the text's narrative (and the reader's psychic) economy" (2007, p. 63), the novel treats the subject of traumatic memory and its resistance to narration self-reflexively.

J. Hillis Miller picks up on the damaging impact of trauma on the process of narration in his study of trauma and romance in *Atonement*, adopting a psychoanalytical lens for his reading of the novel, though with a focus on Freud rather than Lacan. Miller identifies a tension between literature as a form of escapism and the "incredible amount of traumatic

violence" that is represented in many contemporary art forms; he seeks to tease out this paradox in *Atonement*, linking, for example, Briony's childhood obsession with melodrama to Freud's theory of the "family romance" or "the boy's or girl's fantasy that his or her parents are not the real progenitors" (2013, p. 91). This obsession with romance is key to Briony's misinterpretation of Cecilia and Robbie's sexual encounter, which, according to Miller, follows the "Freudian law of trauma" (p. 92). Following Freud's notion that the trauma generated by the initial event is not apprehended until some later event exposes its neural imprint—a process Freud terms "*Nachträglichkeit*" (Miller 2013, p. 92) or "afterwardsness"—Briony's witnessing of Cecilia and Robbie's lovemaking in the library transforms the previously innocuous "fountain scene," in which Cecilia partially removes her clothing in front of Robbie and jumps into the water to retrieve a piece of a broken family vase, into a traumatic one. But beyond the trauma suffered by the novel's characters, Miller takes his analysis one step further, calling the revelation of Briony's authorship an instance of "Reader's Trauma" (p. 96) which, as with Briony and the library and fountain scenes, forces a re-reading and reinterpretation of events detailed prior to it. For Miller, Briony's revelation forces a "superimposition" of readings, "separated by a temporal gap": readings that are "similar (same words)" and yet "so different (altered meaning)" (p. 99). This superimposition, like the dual events Briony witnesses, "fits the Freudian paradigm of trauma" (p. 99).

According to Georges Letissier, the trauma at the heart of *Atonement* foregrounds a tension between creative writing and testimony that problematizes the act of writing as a mode of assuaging Briony's guilt. He too identifies the Freudian model of trauma at work in Part One, pointing out how Briony's misinterpretation of Robbie and Cecilia's interaction at the fountain "points at the question of narrative reliability and at the significance of blind spots" in her memory and testimony (2011, p. 216). Within trauma theory, the notion of blindness as it relates to traumatic memory is characteristic not only of the belatedness of one's experience of trauma (Freud's notion of afterwardsness implies a blindness towards the initial traumatic event) but also of the ethics of its representation: Caruth speaks of a "refusal of understanding that is also a creative act of listening" (1996, p. 123, n13).

This idea of wilful refusal of understanding is central to the development of an aesthetics of trauma fiction that seeks to reproduce a certain lack of understanding or apprehension of traumatic events by way of nar-

rative evasion, repetition, etc. It also rather conveniently suits Briony's theory of fiction as a perpetual, "always … impossible … attempt" (p. 371) at reconciliation. Further, by eschewing linear temporality, the novel approximates Caruth's notion of trauma as a breach in the survivor's sense of time: "Trauma," Caruth contends, "is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (p. 4). Letissier's conclusion—that the novel, "instead of showing the fluid continuity of time, viewed from the vantage point of a sheltered present … show[s] a past that does not become past, and whose return into the present may be construed as symptomatic of traumatic time" (2011, p. 213)—invests the novel's theme of personal trauma with historical significance: the troubling of linear temporality that *Atonement* enacts problematizes the way we think about and narrativize the collective traumas of the twentieth century. *Atonement*, then, is as much about ways of representing trauma, whether individual or collective, as it is about these traumas *per se*.

Each of these critics addresses to some degree the work *Atonement* does on a structural level both to convey the damaging impact of the trauma Briony has witnessed on her psyche and to transmit something of that trauma to the reader. Their viewpoints converge (not unexpectedly) on the Freudian model of trauma that characterizes both Briony's experience of the events in Part One of the novel and the reader's experience of the narrative rupture that occurs when Briony's authorship is revealed. Of course, given Briony's position as author, the part that genre and literary convention have to play in her project of narrating the trauma she has witnessed as well as absolving herself of the guilt of her false accusation of Robbie deserves special attention. Miller duly undertakes a sustained study of this role. He contends that *Atonement* follows the structure of romances, which "generally, though by no means always, are stories of an innocent girl growing up and marrying her Prince Charming" (2013, p. 91). Part of the tension *Atonement* generates between fiction as escapism and fiction as testimony relies, Miller argues, on its following "the pattern of [Briony's play] *The Trials of Arabella*, including the happy ending," in spite of Briony's noting in the final chapter that "matters are not quite so simple" (p. 92). For Miller, the novel's disquieting complication of the relationship between fiction and reality, inside and outside, has at least as much in common with *Don Quixote* or *Tristram Shandy* as with the postmodern tradition.

While Miller does discuss the presence of Gothic within McEwan's novel, it is not the central focus of his study. Rather, he locates the genre within a lineage of romance literature that "comes in many flavours, from fairy tales, folk tales, and the medieval *Romance of the Rose*, through *Don Quixote* and the romances of chivalry that drove him mad, then up to Gothic novels of the Romantic period, and eventually to modern popular paperback 'romances' and to high-brow postmodern novels like *Atonement*" (p. 91). His discussion of the Gothic in the narrative is limited to Briony's role as what he calls a latter-day Catherine Morland, who, like "the heroine of Jane Austen's wonderfully funny, ironic, and profound parody of a Gothic romance, *Northanger Abbey* (1817–18), mistakenly interprets events around her according to the paradigm of the Gothic novels she has read, with disastrous results" (p. 93). Rightly pointing to the epigraph to the novel, which quotes at length from Austen's Gothic parody,[3] Miller elaborates on the significance of romance to Briony's misrecognition of the events she witnesses, and on its links to the Freudian pattern of trauma:

In a way that echoes Catherine Morland's mistakes, Briony misreads the scene she witnesses from the window as Robbie's sexual assault of Cecilia. The novel follows the Freudian sequence: first the innocent version, then the traumatic repetition. Briony makes the same kind of errors Catherine does, and for the same reason. Robbie Turner has, Briony thinks, forced Cecilia to undress. She describes the scene, as she has misinterpreted it, to her visiting slightly older cousin Lola. They agree that

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[3] McEwan's epigraph draws from a conversation between Catherine and the pragmatic Henry Tilney, who eventually teaches her to quell her overactive imagination:

Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English: that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you. Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing, where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open? Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting?"

They had reached the end of the gallery; and with tears of shame she ran off to her own room. (Austen 1975, p. 212, qtd in McEwan 2001, epigraph)

Robbie is a "maniac." That misinterpretation is confirmed later that day when Briony, who, the reader learns much later, still has a suppressed adolescent crush on Robbie, comes upon Robbie and Cecilia making love standing up in a dark corner of the library. Briony, perhaps motivated in part by jealousy, misreads this as Robbie's second sexual assault on an unwilling Cecilia (p. 93).

Miller's reading hints at the novel's metafictional qualities, which work in concert with Part One's Freudian undertones: Briony, accustomed to viewing the world through the lens of one of her melodramas, quite literally misreads the events of the day in a way that is later echoed by readers themselves once they experience the narrative rupture that Briony's authorial revelation enacts:

> If Briony, like Catherine Morland, misreads events because she expects them to fall into a preconceived narrative pattern, which of us readers can deny doing the same, for example when we make certain assumptions about *Atonement* during a first reading? These assumptions turn out to be grotesquely mistaken, as the reader discovers at the end. The reader, I as reader at least, is led to become like Catherine Morland or like Briony Tallis. (p. 96)

The so-called Reader's Trauma that this rupture provokes is, according to Miller, due to the affinity between Briony and the reader, both of whom misread the events leading up to Briony's revelation according to biases they might bring to the narrative. Though Miller does not explicitly invoke the work of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub in linking this misreading to the readerly trauma he describes, the set of literary conventions upon which Briony builds her narrative, and which she then breaks late in the novel, are analogous to Felman and Laub's model of traumatic memory as that which lies "in excess of our frames of reference" (1992, p. 5). Miller's investigation of the role of McEwan's epigraph and of Briony as latter-day Catherine Morland, while thorough, is less focused on the specific role of the Gothic than it is on literary convention more generally and (surprisingly) does not address these Gothic elements in light of the genre's particularly intimate connection to Freudian models of trauma.

Aside from Miller, only Letissier alludes to the presence of the Gothic within *Atonement*, and only in passing. He notes that "*Atonement* introduces 'double haunting' as a counter discourse to war propaganda: the famous Dunkirk spirit" (2011, p. 224). Briony is, for Letissier, a

haunting presence within the narrative: she "undertakes the work of archivist, gathering primary sources to bear witness, as an act of atonement for having blundered into history through a rash accusation" and in this way, much like a ghost, "returns to scenes that have not been laid to rest in the collective memory" (p. 224). Letissier points out that Briony "ghost-writes original letters recording the traumatic events prior to the Dunkirk evacuation, by editing them for the purpose of a fiction that is paying a debt to the past, by lending a voice to old anonymous vets" (p. 224). Still, Briony constantly reminds readers that she can never make up for her false accusation: the "short circuiting of perception" that occurs the moment Briony witnesses Paul Marshall raping Lola "triggers a haunting pattern of belated returns" (pp. 217–218).

Letissier's Gothic metaphors can only hint at the role Gothic narrative tropes and structures have to play in deepening the novel's importance as a work of history, memory, and mourning. The Gothic elements of Briony's narrative go beyond the light-hearted fare of Austen's parody or the figurative manifestation of latent trauma in the form of a haunting, directly contributing to the tension the novel generates between fiction and testimony. By self-consciously and self-reflexively adopting a structure that is particularly (and intentionally) Gothic, *Atonement* explores Briony's guilt as a way of relating to her past, while also raising questions about what Athanasios Anastasiadis has termed modern society's own postmemorial relationship to the collective traumas of the twentieth century. If we accept Bruhm's suggestion, discussed in this book's introduction, that the Gothic narrative *is* the narrative of trauma and the Gothic subject *is* the psychoanalytic subject (2002, pp. 261–262, 268), then *Atonement* typifies Bruhm's theory of the interchangeability of Gothic narrative and trauma fiction, with Briony embodying the simultaneously Gothic and psychoanalytic being.

The events of Part One, which lead up to Lola's rape and are narrated from the perspective of young Briony, are decidedly Gothic in both tone and imagery, emphasizing the unhomeliness of the Tallis household on the day when, with parents *in absentia*, the home space is retrospectively turned into what amounts to a nightmare of Briony's own creation.[4] The

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[4] Both of the Tallis parents are notably absent—a detail upon which Briony's narration lingers in a way that casts a certain amount of blame on both of them for the circumstances surrounding Lola's rape: "Two years ago her father disappeared into the preparation of mysterious consultation documents for the Home Office. Her mother had always lived in an

uncharacteristically oppressive, "ludicrously hot" weather (McEwan 2001, p. 37), described by the narrator as lying "across the Home Counties like smoke, suffocating the farms and towns" (p. 64), generates a palpable sense of suffocation that sets the stage for the fateful events to follow within the Tallises' sham-Gothic mansion. Descriptions of the house itself emphasize its menacing atmosphere, foregrounding its peculiar *un*homeliness: it seems to shrink tighter with every pulse of the chronic migraines that keep Briony's mother Emily's much-needed maternal presence closeted away in her dark bedroom for much of the day. The narrator describes Emily's headache, which is accompanied by clicking sensations, in figurative terms, with the seemingly shrinking house as vehicle for the tenor of her ever-worsening pain. She "hear[s] the house creak as it expanded. Or were the rafters and posts drying out and contracting against the masonry? Shrinking, everything was shrinking" (p. 64). As she "rest[s] her palm against her forehead, and hear[s] another tick as the building shrank tighter" (p. 65), Emily conjures the image of a literal (and Jamesian) "turn of the screw" that transforms the house into a space which no longer shelters, but instead imprisons the fragmented family within it, setting the stage for Lola's rape, which is to follow later that night. Emily's presence, when felt at all, is akin to a ghost; her consciousness floats through the various rooms of the house, putting out "a tentacular awareness that reached out from the dimness and moved through the house, unseen and all-knowing" (p. 66). Additionally, Briony's presence *to* her mother is also ghost-like: Emily calls Briony "the ghost of her childhood, diffused throughout the room, to remind her of the limited arc of existence" (p. 150). This retrospective, ghostly characterization of both Emily and Briony, in which communication between parent and child is cut off, contributes to the sense of impending danger that pervades the home, signifying the family ties that should be present, but are not, and which will inevitably lead to the trauma that is to follow.

Gothic imagery intensifies as the tension builds towards the text's traumatic nucleus: the absence of Emily's maternal influence is amplified by another peculiar feature of the house, this time a trick of the mirror that transforms Cecilia in her black crêpe de Chine dress—an effort at projecting the "relaxed" and "self-contained" look of feminine maturity—into "a

invalid's shadow land" (McEwan 2001, p. 103). The tone of doubt and resignation with which both parents' absence is accounted for implicates them in the trauma to follow.

woman on her way to a funeral, an austere, joyless woman moreover, whose black carapace had affinities with some form of matchbox-dwelling insect. A stag beetle! It was her future self, at eighty-five, in widow's weeds" (p. 97). Briony's older sister is, throughout most of Part One, intensely preoccupied with appearing mature and sophisticated, though the effect is mainly superficial, amounting to outward performative gestures such as smoking cigarettes, agonizing over what constitutes the most sophisticated wardrobe choice, and acting as aloof towards Robbie as possible. Her moment in front of the mirror is a failed effort at taking Emily's place as surrogate authority figure—an attempt which the house physically thwarts. In this moment, by the mirror's distorting reflection, the home space rejects any attempts at replacing the parental absence that contributes to the traumatic events to follow.

Briony's Gothic narration extends to a key site where domesticity is performed, and in this case, corrupted: the kitchen. As Cecilia descends to the kitchen, she is forced to mediate a quarrel between her mother and the staff over whether or not a roast—considered wildly inappropriate given the suffocating heat of the afternoon—will be served. The argument is set amidst the detritus of what will come to make up the family meal, which is described in abject terms that undermine the domesticity of the space:

> The labour in the kitchen had been long and hard all day in the heat, and the residue was everywhere: the flagstone floor was slick with the spilt grease of roasted meat and trodden-in peel; sodden tea towels, tributes to heroic forgotten labours, drooped above the range like decaying regimental banners in church; nudging Cecilia's shin, an overflowing basket of vegetable trimmings. … The cook glanced over her shoulder at the newcomer, and before she turned away there was time to see the fury in eyes that cheek fat had narrowed to gelatinous slices. (p. 104)

Like the uncanniness that characterizes the Tallis household and the ghostliness that marks Briony and Emily's relationship, Cecilia's impressions of the abjectified kitchen refuse perverts the archetype of the family dinner as a site of the ritual performance of domesticity.

As theorized by Julia Kristeva (1982), the abject refers to the human reaction to that which threatens the boundary between subject and object, self and other. The epitome of the abject is the corpse, which serves as a reminder of the body's materiality (this image will take centre stage in Part Two, when the injured Robbie, retreating to Dunkirk with two fellow

soldiers, is struck by the sight of a young child's severed leg in a tree). But filth (including food waste) also poses a threat to the cohesive self, and is, as such, cast off. "[F]ilth," Kristeva writes, "is not a quality in itself, but it applies only to what relates to a *boundary* and, more particularly, represents the object jettisoned out of that boundary, its other side, a margin" (p. 69, original emphasis). Given that the scene immediately follows Cecilia's failed attempt to assume the role of feminine authority, her view of the kitchen refuse reinforces the sense that the narrative of the nuclear family is being undermined. The various layers of kitchen refuse (while likely innocuous to the kitchen staff themselves) are rendered through Cecilia's perspective as an image of corruption at the heart of what should be a ritual reinforcing the Tallis family ties. The scene immediately following confirms the undermining of the family relationship: incredible tension is felt between the "nauseous" dinner guests when they later gather in the "airless dining room" (McEwan 2001, p. 125) to eat a meal in an anxiety-riddled silence which, readers are told, "would easily have been dispersed" (p. 126) by Jack Tallis's paternal influence—if only he had not, in effect, abandoned his family. Once again, the home becomes a scene of suffocating entrapment, setting the stage for the rape scene that will make up the text's traumatic locus.[5]

The height of Part One's mounting tension is of course the dinner party itself, which, as already mentioned, alludes both to Woolf and to the conventions of the Gothic. As in the dinner scene of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, the guests, while seated together, are completely withdrawn into their own individual concerns, oblivious to each other's inner turmoil: Robbie and Cecilia have just been interrupted in their lovemaking by a fuming and hostile Briony; the fifteen-year-old Lola has just been physically assaulted by the twenty-four-year-old Paul Marshall (and, unbeknownst to readers, is soon to be the victim of a rape); and her unhappy nine-year-old twin brothers, Jackson and Pierrot, are plotting to run away. The tension is palpable, the emphasis on isolated individual consciousness adding to the sense of fractured familial bonds that contribute to the circumstances leading to the rape itself. But the dinner scene may also be read as an

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[5] As will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, it is not only the narrative of familial kinship and the safety and security that accompany it which are under threat; indeed, the eventual revelation of Briony's authorship will cause the entire narrative to unravel, lending to this scene new meaning when re-read with full knowledge of the instability that lies at the heart of Briony's account of the events that make up the novel's traumatic core.

example of what Donna Lee Brien (2014) calls "morbid dining" (p. 196). Brien writes that culinary production and consumption "can be read as positive, life-affirming and celebratory" (p. 195). And yet, as affirmed by the novel's abjectification of the food in the Tallises' lower kitchen, "everything concerned with food (what, when, how, who with, and why it is produced and consumed) is also the site of considerable personal and societal anxiety. The culinary is also the subject of numerous taboos, and this is one area where, as cultural objects and processes, food and cookery intersect with the Gothic" (p. 195). In the case of *Atonement*, the Gothic influence can be felt through the "asphyxiating silence" (McEwan 2001, p. 127) of the dinner guests; the stifling atmosphere caused by the tall windows which refuse to open; the room's only painting, "a vast canvas" (p. 125) showing "an aristocratic family … pale as ghouls" (p. 126); and the "soft tapping on the window panes as various flying creatures of the night threw themselves against the glass" (p. 139). Here the absentee father whose secret business at the Home Office keeps him away from the Tallis home, and his replacement with the threat of war and greed embodied by Paul Marshall (who happens to be a businessman getting rich from the development of a chocolate bar—containing no actual chocolate—that will soon be placed in every British soldier's kit bag), constitutes a perversion of familial space, staging, in figurative terms, the erosion of the family unit by the impending war. As an instance of "morbid dining," the scene performs a second role that may be understood through Brien's study. The author focuses on the last meal of prisoners as a particularly salient example of an act that is "traditionally understood as sociable and generous—that of preparing, serving, and partaking in a meal" that is turned into "an example of macabre and, therefore, transgressive hospitality when this food practice is a component of the act of publicly sanctioned murder" (Brien 2014, p. 196). In addition to providing the set of metaphors through which Briony as narrator can attempt to process and convey the breakdown of the Tallis family that is already taking place, the scene's Gothic atmosphere generates a mounting sense of dread that foreshadows the act that will unjustly condemn Robbie to prison, active duty, and death. As Briony's false accusation will leave Robbie without the support even of Jack Tallis, arguably the most trusted adult in his life, and effectively "serve" him the short and unredeemed life of a criminal, the dinner scene may be read as a prime example of the sort of "transgressive hospitality" that Brien identifies, and, through its Gothic characterization, is symbolically translated into Robbie's last meal.

Briony's initial traumatic locus itself turns on sexual taboo: the unspeakable slang word for female genitalia contained in Robbie's purloined letter to Cecilia, described by Briony as "a typographical demon" which "disgust[s] her profoundly" (McEwan 2001, p. 114), and her stumbling upon Robbie and Cecilia's sexual encounter in a shadowed corner of the library, an experience which leads the naïve Briony to declare Robbie "a maniac treading through the night with a dark, unfulfilled heart" (p. 157). These startling events cement the Freudian "Gothicization" of Briony's otherwise realist narration of the trauma contained in Part One. And her Gothic narration will take on further significance after her authorship is revealed, prompting a "compulsive return" to what Bruhm has termed the "fixations, obsessions, and blockages" characteristic of both Freudian psychology and Gothic narrative (2002, p. 261). But there is more to the Gothic's presence than a satisfying coalescence of form and content. Reading the presence of Gothic tropes alongside the many metafictional references in the novel reveals the degree to which Briony narrativizes (and hence, constructs) her memory of what she has witnessed. As a novel that is intended at least in part as "a matter of historical record" (McEwan 2001, p. 369)—a way of preserving the events of the past amidst Briony's encroaching dementia—this narrative dissonance raises important questions about assumptions surrounding the stability of such means of recording and preserving history. After all, Briony calls her novel a "forensic memoir" (p. 370), claiming she will hold off publishing until Lola and Paul Marshall have died so that it may move from historical record to "legal reality" (p. 369). The novel lends itself, then, to being read as written testimony, and in this way represents an artefact of cultural memory, seemingly more stable, permanent, and reliable than communicative memory.[6] Elements of self-reflexivity combine with the Freudian Gothic undertones of the first section of *Atonement*, constituting a metagothic style that both foregrounds Briony's embellishment of her narrative and questions the novel's validity as a vehicle of cultural memory.

While Bruhm asserts that what characterizes the contemporary Gothic is its intense self-awareness, he does not employ the term *metagothic*, nor

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[6] Anastasiadis distinguishes communicative memory, which "is not institutional, but is based on everyday communication and is constituted by contemporaries of the event in question" from cultural memory, which, "in contrast, is detached from individual memory. It is a *stabilized* form of memory, which is symbolized and mediated by artifacts, rites or icons and preserved by mnemonic institutions like museums, libraries and archives" (2012, p. 2, emphasis added).

do some other critics whose work explores the common ground that the Gothic and metafiction share. For example, Maria Beville's *Gothic-Postmodernism*, which explores the intersections of the Gothic and the postmodern in contemporary literature,[7] never uses the term, despite including a discussion of metafiction as "a vehicle for ontological exploration, and a tool for reshaping the reader's concepts of fiction and subsequently, reality" (2009, p. 129). Andrew O'Heir deploys the label "Meta-Gothic" in the title of his October 2015 review of Guillermo del Toro's horror film *Crimson Peak* (2015). Though he does not go on to use the term in the body of his article and provides no formal definition, his use is obviously grounded in (and is used to describe) the combination of the film's apparent Gothic intertextuality and foregrounding of its own status as artifice.[8] O'Heir's "Meta-Gothic," then, might also be termed "metafictional Gothic," that is, fiction whose self-reflexivity and intertextuality draws from a Gothic literary pool. Only Daneen Wardrop offers a working definition of "metagothic" (in the context of the poetry of Emily Dickinson), though Wardrop emphasizes self-reflexivity over intertextuality, from which she departs altogether. She calls Dickinson's "Fascicle 16" "'metagothic,' a condition in which a work defines Gothicism even as it conveys Gothic effects" (2002, p. 144), in this case by reflecting on how the Gothic operates on bodily sensations of fear produced by the uncanny as these feelings are being articulated by the speaker.

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[7] Beville (2009) defines what she calls a "new genre": that of "Gothic-postmodernism," which articulates "the psychological and philosophical implications of terror in postmodernist literature" as "analogous to the terror of early Gothic works" (p. 9). By "emphasizing the role of the Gothic sublime and its concern with the unpresentable as the core of the genre," Beville's study defines Gothic-postmodernism as "a hybrid mode that emerges from the dialogic interaction of Gothic and postmodernist characteristics in a given text" (p. 9).

[8] With respect to the film's intertextuality, for example, O'Heir writes that it "is effectively an imitation of 25 different things" and that it "calls upon innumerable cultural references," many of which could be classified as Gothic; O'Heir argues that the film is "part Mary Shelley and part Arthur Conan Doyle (both authors are specifically mentioned), but it's also *Jane Eyre* and H.P. Lovecraft and Hitchcock's *Rebecca* and Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* and a little nineteenth-century American realism by way of Edith Wharton or William Dean Howells" (2015). With respect to the deliberately artificial style of the film, O'Heir writes (somewhat disparagingly) that it is "mannered and stylized and layered to deliberate but almost suffocating excess," noting, for example, that the "garish and rambling manor house" in which the film is set "resembles the Haunted Mansion at Disneyland more than an actual English domicile of any vintage" (2015).

The different purposes to which the term has been employed across different literary contexts by this surprisingly small number of critics, each emphasizing slightly different definitions, points to a need for some additional theorization. The definition of metagothic as it is employed here draws on Bruhm's assertion of the importance of self-reflexivity as a defining feature of the contemporary Gothic and on Beville's suggestion that ontological exploration is a common driving principle of both the Gothic and metafiction (and thus of Gothic-postmodernism). *Atonement* disrupts the boundary between creative writing and testimony and, hence, the boundary between fiction and reality in a way that is classically metafictional, and it does so by deploying Gothic tropes and narrative structures in an intensely self-aware way.[9] While the heavy Freudian and Gothic undertones present in the first part of the novel work to reflect on the level of content the Freudian/Gothic structure of the novel as a whole (which is also the structure of Briony's experience of trauma), they also constitute a form of Gothic intertextuality that calls attention to the work's status as artefact and troubles ontological boundaries long before Briony reveals her authorship.

The novel's epigraph, casting Briony in the role of a contemporary Catherine Morland, signals how *Atonement* draws attention to its status as artefact. As previously mentioned, for Miller, this pairing's significance is that it highlights Briony's misreading of Robbie and Cecilia's sexual encounter and, consequently, Lola's rape by Paul Marshall. But considering *Atonement* as metafictional in its troubling of ontological boundaries—that is, of the boundary between fiction and reality—adds an additional layer of significance to the congruity between Briony and Austen's heroine. Briony is not simply a passive reader interpreting events as they unfold; she is also the author of them. Her association with this Gothic heroine does not render her the hapless, innocent witness to events but actually gives her a dangerous power to control the narrative even after she claims to have written the novel as a means of atoning for past sins and setting the historical record straight by revealing the ostensibly unvarnished truth. She is Catherine Morland, but with creative agency. Despite Briony's expressed desire to convey events as they actually happened, her (perhaps stronger) desire to shape the narrative according to a particular set of

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[9] I refer here to Patricia Waugh's definition of metafiction as "a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (1984, p. 2).

literary conventions is evident in the way she characterizes her young self as creative writer. She describes herself as "one of those children possessed by a desire to have the world just so" (McEwan 2001, p. 4), claiming that "writing stories not only involved secrecy, it also gave her all the pleasures of miniaturisation" (p. 7). This love of order shapes her childhood writing style, which conforms to the literary formulae of nineteenth-century sensation fiction, melodrama, and, of course, the Gothic, where, as Briony reflects, "[a] crisis in a heroine's life could be made to coincide with hailstones, gales and thunder, whereas nuptials were generally blessed with good light and soft breezes," and "death and marriage [were] the main engines of housekeeping, the former being set aside exclusively for the morally dubious, the latter a reward withheld until the final page" (p. 7).

Reading the illicit love letter meant for Cecilia prompts, Briony asserts, a shift in her theory of fiction. Contemplating how she should record the fountain scene discussed earlier (unaware of the broken vase piece, she has mistakenly interpreted this moment as Robbie ordering a partially undressed Cecilia into the water), Briony claims to now be freed from the confines of literary convention (a shift reminiscent of Felman and Laub's notion of trauma as an event lying "in excess of our frames of reference" [1992, p. 5] by which we order our worldview). Briony characterizes her shift in perspective as an opening up of new narrative possibilities:

> She could write the scene three times over, from three points of view; her excitement was in the prospect of freedom, of being delivered from the cumbrous struggle between good and bad, heroes and villains. None of these three was bad, nor were they particularly good. She need not judge. … It wasn't only wickedness and scheming that made people unhappy, it was confusion and misunderstanding; above all, it was the failure to grasp the simple truth that other people are as real as you. And only in a story could you enter these different minds and show how they had an equal value. That was the only moral a story need have. (McEwan 2001, p. 40)

Nevertheless, this revelation fails to mitigate the effects of Briony's misinterpretation of Lola's rape later that night. In spite of her alleged epiphany, her will to construct a narrative around Robbie's mania remains; hence, her version of events will necessarily conform to her own preconceived biases—her own point of view, which she privileges above any other. Briony retrospectively narrates this watershed moment with full knowledge that her attempt to show how the "different minds" involved

in the incident have "an equal value" is doomed to fail. It is debatable, then, whether *Atonement*, as the crowning achievement of Briony's success as a writer and as a work that appears to conform to the theory of fiction above, does not also succumb to the same biases that led to Briony's false accusation against Robbie. One wonders if Briony has in fact moved beyond her childhood desire to have her world "just so" and whether *Atonement* is not merely another iteration of Briony's indulgences in literary convention: a piece "intended to inspire not laughter, but terror, relief and instruction, in that order" (p. 8).

The idea that "no other modern literary form as influential as the Gothic novel has also been as pervasively conventional" (Sedgwick 1986, p. 9) allows for a reading of the novel's juxtaposition of Gothic tropes with references to the constructed nature of the scenes leading up to Lola's rape as evidence of Briony's ongoing self-conscious need to shape the narrative according to literary convention. This need problematizes any consideration of Briony's novel—and perhaps even the novel form itself—as testimony. Her descriptions of the Tallis mansion, for example, take on a metafictional quality, connecting metaphorically to her own theory of fiction. She points to "[t]he ugliness of the Tallis home," which, like her own novel, is a modern iteration of Gothic convention (albeit this time architectural): a "barely forty years old, bright orange brick, squat, lead-paned baronial Gothic" that, not unlike her own novel, will one day be condemned as "a tragedy of wasted chances" (McEwan 2001, p. 19). Cecilia's descriptions of the home's counterfeit Gothic interior, emphasizing its staged quality, recalls O'Heir's description of *Crimson Peak*'s lurid, Disneyesque manor: her impression of the drawing room lingers on "the perfection of the scene—by the three faded Chesterfields grouped around the almost new Gothic fireplace" (McEwan 2001, p. 20). Later, she feels "under her hand the black-stained varnished pine of the bannisters, vaguely neo-Gothic, immovably solid and sham" (p. 102). The sense of artifice extends to the kitchen scene, with Cecilia emphasizing the "disembodied faces" that hang "at different heights, like studies in an artist's sketchbook" (p. 103); in the tension-filled dinner party soon after, the "effect of suffocation" is "heightened" by "a vast canvas that hung above a fireplace unlit since its construction" (p. 125). Cecilia's moment in front of the mirror, too, takes on new meaning, her "widow's weeds" (p. 97) foreshadowing Robbie's future death and the mirror's trickery hinting at the constructed and artificial nature of Briony's narration of past events.

The sham-Gothic quality of Part One even extends to the scene of Lola's rape, on "an artificial island in an artificial lake" (p. 163). Tellingly, Briony witnesses the event only after she forces herself to venture into the eerie darkness by virtue of the fact that "the day had proved to her that she was not a child, and that she was now a figure in a richer story and had to prove herself worthy of it" (p. 163). The result (much as O'Heir asserts in reference to *Crimson Peak*) produces in readers a sense of suffocation in contrivance: as much as, or perhaps even more than, the effect of suffocation already produced by the heat of the day and the claustrophobia of the seemingly shrinking house. These qualities, which lead Briony to employ the epithet "charmless to a fault" (p. 19) to describe the architectural style of the Tallis home, echo her thoughts (as well as those of publishers) on her own earlier drafts of *Atonement*, signalling the guilt with which she relates to both the events that mark this period in her life and her own writing. What marks Part One of *Atonement* as distinctly metagothic is how its Gothic elements are inextricably bound to the narrative's frequent references to its own status as artifice.

What, then, is the purpose of the metagothic inflection of McEwan's novel? Despite her insistence that she sees it as her duty, from the second draft onward, "to disguise nothing—the names, the places, the exact circumstances" (p. 369), Briony's decision to "let my lovers live" (p. 372) already violates her commitment to verisimilitude. Her self-conscious employment of the narrative conventions of the Gothic in Part One of the novel—the part Briony clearly views as her testimony—reflects what Briony, consciously or not, reveals to be a deep ambivalence about her craft. Her characterization of her novel as a vehicle of testimony that she expects to carry both historical and legal weight is in stark contrast to the theory of fiction Briony (somewhat begrudgingly) elaborates in practically the same breath. Even as she laments that "as a matter of legal reality, so various editors have told me over the years, my forensic memoir could never be published while my fellow criminals were alive," she recognizes that the best defence against charges of libel from the offended parties (i.e., the wealthy and powerful Marshalls) is to "displace, transmute, dissemble. Bring down the fogs of the imagination! What are novelists for? Go just so far as is necessary, set up camp inches beyond the reach, the fingertips of the law. … To be safe, one would have to be bland and obscure" (pp. 369–370). Briony's need to absolve herself of the guilt of her false accusation by finally telling the truth is at odds with the imperative to disguise certain facts, seemingly for legal purposes. Nonetheless, the

cynical tone Briony employs implicitly critiques the editing process, as well as the problematics of producing a narrative intended both as a form of personal testimony and as an object for consumption by a public audience.

But Briony reveals that she will indeed wait until all parties involved (including herself) have died to have her novel published, leaving her free to publish the so-called unvarnished truth posthumously. However, the fact that the final product readers hold in their hands is a work of fiction reveals the degree to which Briony is, wittingly or not, at least partially motivated by the performative aspect of creative writing, which is at odds with her intent to set the record straight publicly about her own and Paul Marshall's crime. These competing motivations reflect the inherent contradiction at the heart of testimony between the "performative relationship between art and culture" on the one hand and "the conscious or unconscious witnessing of historical events" on the other, which, Felman and Laub suggest, necessitates acknowledging the performance of testimony as carrying its own truth, in spite of how the performative aspect of testimony may clash with notions of historical accuracy (1992, p. xx). What is particularly interesting about *Atonement*, however, is not the potential inaccuracy and embellishment of Briony's testimony *per se* but rather her interpretations of the creative choices she makes, which, for Briony, constitute an act of meaning-making. Her assertion that "There was a crime. But there were also the lovers. Lovers and their happy ends have been on my mind all night long" (McEwan 2001, p. 370), as well as her question, "Who would want to believe that [Robbie and Cecilia do not survive], except in the service of the bleakest realism?" (p. 371),[10] indicates that for Briony, meaning-making takes place in the gaps in her testimony. As she writes, "I gave them happiness, but I was not so self-serving as to let them forgive me" (p. 372): it is the fabrications that fill these gaps that, for Briony, invest her testimony with its ethical function as a means of atonement.

[10] As Briony explains, "It is only in this last version that my lovers end well, standing side by side on a South London pavement as I walk away. All the preceding drafts were pitiless. But now I can no longer think what purpose would be served if, say, I tried to persuade my reader, by direct or indirect means, that Robbie Turner died of septicaemia at Bray Dunes on 1 June 1940, or that Cecilia was killed in September of the same year by the bomb that destroyed Balham Underground station. That I never saw them in that year … that a cowardly Briony limped back to the hospital, unable to confront her recently bereaved sister" (pp. 370–371).

Were Briony not to have revealed the degree to which she has fabricated Robbie and Cecilia's happy ending, then the ethical imperative of Briony's testimony would not be fulfilled; it would instead be an example of the use of the trauma of another as raw material for a fictitious narrative: an act that poses a potential ethical risk. In fact, the thoughts on writing that Briony expresses in the final chapter could very well be read as evidence of this type of cognitive dissonance. After all, she admits in the last line that "[i]t occurs to me that I have not travelled so very far after all, since I wrote my little play. Or rather, I've made a huge digression and doubled back to my starting place" (p. 370), admitting to a certain level of solipsism which, given the egotism and will to narrative control in the young Briony, violates her original assertion that she has not been self-serving in fabricating a happy resolution to Cecilia and Robbie's love story.

Indeed, *Atonement*, as a whole, subjects its initial traumatic locus to literary convention in ways that problematize Briony's desire to publish the unvarnished truth. The Gothic, with its emphasis on rigid tropes and narrative structures, is in many ways a highly convenient framework for ensuring that the disorderly experience of trauma that Briony witnesses (and, to a degree, both creates and endures), is made palatable; thus it is in some ways not surprising that its tropes should emerge amidst the novel's otherwise realist first half. Subtle references to Briony's need for the ordering system of artistic convention support this view; for example, Briony's narration of the fountain scene lingers on the fountain's design and on the artistic intention of Bernini, whose desire to create order out of chaos by causing the water to "trickle musically from the wide shell with its irregular edges into the basin below" stands in opposition to the weak water pressure in the reproduction that causes the water merely to "slid[e] soundlessly down the underside of the shell where opportunistic slime hung in dripping points, like stalactites in a limestone cave" (p. 28). A similar pattern emerges when Cecilia spends several minutes attempting to artfully arrange a bouquet of wildflowers, but then quits, deciding that "[t]here was really no point. … They had tumbled into their own symmetry, and it was certainly true that too even a distribution between the irises and the rose-bay willow-herb ruined the effect" (p. 23). Still, she spends "some minutes making adjustments in order to achieve a natural chaotic look" (p. 23). Despite the desire to preserve the truth, it would appear that Briony cannot help but embellish that truth with the narrative conventions of the Gothic, and she seems intensely aware of this desire as she enacts it.

Much like *The Gates of Ivory*, where the Orientalist portrayal of characters like Miss Porntip shows the act of representation as capable of subsuming the voice of the victims for whom it claims to speak, Briony's Gothic representation at times seems motivated by forces other than empathy. For example, when Robbie returns at dawn with Lola's missing brothers in tow, Briony's penchant for sensationalism creates a depiction that clashes with her intent to rehabilitate his character and to do justice to his heroism. As the family huddles outside, allegedly to prevent the rapist's "polluting presence" (p. 182) from entering the household, they perceive not Robbie, but, rather, a dehumanized "figure who might be Robbie" encroaching on the group through the mist, which (conveniently) shrouds his identity from view, allowing Briony to dwell on the suspense of his approach (p. 181). Briony makes much of this moment of drama; the "tread of shoes along the drive" announces Robbie's presence long before the "indefinable shape" of a monster materializes:

> As the shape took form the waiting group fell silent again. No one could quite believe what was emerging. Surely it was a trick of the mist and light. No one in this age of telephones and motor cars could believe that giants seven or eight feet high existed in crowded Surrey. But here it was, an apparition as inhuman as it was purposeful. The thing was impossible and undeniable, and heading their way. Betty, who was known to be a Catholic, crossed herself as the little crowd huddled closer to the entrance. (p. 181)

Ironically, of course, we then see that Robbie's misshapen, allegedly inhuman appearance is caused by the silhouettes of the rescued twins, one boy asleep atop his shoulders and the other "let[ting] his head loll against Robbie's waist and dr[awing] the man's hand across his chest for protection or warmth" (p. 182). In an instant Robbie is transfigured from something monstrous and demonic—Briony will later note that Robbie, as he is escorted away by police, has "the look of eternal damnation" (p. 184)—to what he has been all along: a tragically sympathetic figure. This conversion of perception no doubt signals Briony's lingering regret over the devastating consequences for Robbie resulting from the biases dooming him (especially Briony's own bias against Robbie as sexual "maniac," a label readily accepted by her family and the police because of Robbie's working-class status). But the scene also reflects the kind of moral pitfalls to which Briony's ostensibly ethical treatment of memory is subject. While she claims to be motivated by a desire to atone for her sins and give back

to Cecilia and Robbie some modicum of the agency her false accusation took away from them, here Briony's sensationalist authorial voice, as well as her desire to fit the events of the night into a recognizable narrative framework, drowns out the victim's voice it intends to reclaim.

The metafictional, Gothic style of Part One signals Briony's acknowledgement of her artistic decision—whether the result of publishers' expectations or her own desire—to make the world "just so": that is, to make order out of chaos through the act of writing. What prompts this literary self-consciousness is an apparent degree of cynicism, or even of guilt, towards the act of narrativizing the trauma she has witnessed: a certain lack of faith in her novel's ability to live up to its title (Letissier aptly calls *Atonement* "the record of an unachievable 'mourning work'" that "eschews the trappings of fiction as problem-solving conjuring trick" [2011, p. 210]). Her cynicism introduces an irresolvable conflict as readers are prompted to oscillate back and forth between the events Briony has just narrated—allegedly to bring closure to the situation—and the scepticism that the author herself feels towards this very project. Readers are left with the sense that the novel might be as much an attempt to self-soothe as to atone, and that Briony might be acting more in her own self-interest than she claims. Briony's awareness of her need to subject the trauma she narrates to a system of literary convention in order to fulfil her own desire for order does not abolish the ethical problems that this act creates when the voice of the author risks (and in this case, openly acknowledges) erasing the voice of the victims.

This oscillatory aspect of Briony's narrative exposes the tension between creative writing and testimony, pushing Felman and Laub's notion of honouring the performance of testimony to its limit, troubling Felman and Laub's contention that listening ethically to survivor testimony necessitates a privileging of the performative aspect of testimony (which may include narrative aphasias, embellishments, or inaccuracies) as a matter of historical and/or legal record. The tension that the novel's dual function as a potential legal document and as artistic construct generates turns on the dichotomy between testimony's literary connection,[11] which leaves the idea of testimony open to these types of gaps/embellishments, and its legal function, which does not. While honouring the performative aspect of testimony—with all of its potential inconsistencies—serves an impor-

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[11] Caruth writes that the language of trauma *must* be literary, in that literature, like trauma is "a language that defies, even as it claims, our understanding" (1996, p. 5).

tant therapeutic purpose for victims, for whom, as LaCapra suggests, writing can be a curative process, these narratives should also, as he says, move beyond "the paradoxical witness to the breakdown of witnessing" in order "to elaborate a mutually informative, critically questioning relation between memory and reconstruction that keeps one sensitive to the problematics of trauma" (1998, p. 183). The relationship between memory and reconstruction in narratives of trauma should not be subsumed by the drive to reproduce in these narratives the symptoms of trauma's resistance to narration.

Current debates surrounding the transgenerational communication of trauma from a postmemorial perspective can help to illuminate how *Atonement* moves beyond the paradox LaCapra identifies, towards the alternative he suggests. Crosthwaite contends that *Atonement* "overtly dramatizes the situation of the generation born in the aftermath of World War II" (2009, p. 14), questioning how authors are to represent past traumas which they themselves did not experience, but to which they are nevertheless connected (McEwan's father was a career soldier and many of the novel's wartime scenes are drawn from his father's own war stories, as well as from historical accounts of the conflict housed in the archives of the Imperial War Museum—sources which Briony herself claims to have consulted).[12] Accepting Caruth's notion of the unlocalizability of trauma—that collective trauma is an experience that "can only be possessed within a history larger than any single individual or any single generation" (1996, p. 71)—makes the problem of how to ethically represent that trauma all the more crucial.

Anastasiadis's study into the postmemorial narration of trauma can help to explain Briony's choice to make explicit her conflicting narrative impulses. The both intimate and problematic relationship between creative writing and testimony is akin to the distinction Anastasiadis makes between individual and cultural memory. Drawing on both Caruth's notion of trauma's unlocalizability and Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory, Anastasiadis analyses the narrative tools and strategies characteristic of postmemorial novels. Hirsch's notion of postmemory, as outlined by Anastasiadis (2012), "describes a mode of remembering that crosses generations and which is based on retrospective reconstruction. It refers explicitly to the situation of a generation which has not experienced or witnessed the traumatic events directly, but received them as second-hand

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[12] See Crosthwaite, *Trauma*, pp. 159–160.

knowledge" (p. 6). While Anastasiadis does not address *Atonement* directly, his model of postmemory as "the process of transgenerational transmission of traumatic experiences and memories, as well as its ambiguous structure," which "oscillates between knowledge and the lack of knowledge," is "fragmentary," and "characterized by instability, rupture, epistemological gaps and belatedness" (p. 7), is applicable to readers' experience of Briony's narration, both as described by Crosthwaite and as acknowledged by Briony herself.

Like Caruth's theory of trauma, the reception of Hirsch's theory of postmemory has not been without controversy: Anastasiadis notes that in J. J. Long's opinion, "Hirsch's concept devalues the experiences of the first generation because the epistemological authority is shifted from the first to the second generation and 'establishes the second generation as the heroic subject in a narrative of belated recuperation'" (Long 2006, p. 149, qtd in Anastasiadis 2012, p. 9). However, the fact that the capacity for trauma to "haunt" subsequent generations is overdetermined in Hirsch's work makes it all the more useful to Anastasiadis's study of postmemorial texts, since the concept of buried trauma/postmemory is often overdetermined in these works as well (as seen, for instance, in narration, conversation, interlacing of present and past, incorporation of factual material/photos/other media, and attention to the psychological consequences of the postmemory process). In *Atonement*, the concept of postmemory is on full display in the final chapter as Briony essentially offers an apology for the very novel that readers hold in their hands.

Anastasiadis's interest in postmemorial narratives stems from his contention that unresolved (and particularly silenced) traumatic events can be transmitted from one generation to the next, which can lead to generational conflict. It becomes imperative, then, that as fewer and fewer primary witnesses to events like the Spanish Civil War, the Holocaust, the Greek Civil War, and World War II remain, such traumas become narrativized and memorialized as a matter of historical record: "The last witnesses of great European social and political catastrophes of the first half of the twentieth century … are now entering old age and will soon no longer be in our midst. The individual memory of these events will be forever lost" (Anastasiadis 2012, p. 2). As a result, there is the need for the "important historical transition" from "communicative" memory (constituted by primary witnesses to the traumatic event) to the more "stabilized" "cultural memory" form, as institutionalized in museums, for example (p. 2). Anastasiadis's choice of "stabilized" to describe cultural

memory is noteworthy, since it suggests that unmediated individual memory is *un*stable, disorderly, and unreliable. This unreliability is especially true in the case of victims of trauma, whose memory is prone to be "contradictory and fragmented," resisting a straightforward narrative structure that a cultural artefact, ritual, or institution seemingly stands to provide (p. 1).

Briony's authorship problematizes a dichotomy that privileges cultural memory as inherently more stable than individual memory while ignoring the intimate relationship between the two. As she is suffering from vascular dementia, her uncertainty around how much of her memory she has lost (and when exactly her memory loss started) means that her powers of recollection are an unknown unknown: "Which portion of my mind, of my memory, had I lost to a minuscule stroke while I was asleep? I would never know" (McEwan 2001, p. 362). This uncertainty problematizes the text's presumed stability as a vehicle of cultural memory. Additionally, Briony's narrative raises important ethical questions surrounding who controls the historical record when memory makes the transition from communicative to cultural. As a written account of Lola's rape, Briony's false accusation of Robbie, and its later repercussions that Briony hopes will carry historical and legal power, *Atonement* is intended as a vehicle of cultural memory, which is clear from the extensive research that she has conducted to get the details of the war she depicts right, even if her motives stem at least as much from personal "satisfaction" derived from "these little things, this pointillist approach to verisimilitude" (p. 359). The idea of preserving historical details for posterity is engrained in the very fabric of the text, especially in sections detailing Briony's nursing work, which are extremely detail-laden. Crosthwaite is interested in where these highly descriptive passages yield to more postmodernist techniques, but they are also interesting in their own right for their archival quality. Descriptions of Briony cleaning off the wound of one soldier, for example, read like the uncovering of an archaeological artefact: "She took more cotton-wool. It was oil, or grease, mixed in with beach sand, and it did not come away easily. She cleaned an area six inches back, working her way right around the wound" (McEwan 2001, p. 297). Briony's exposure to soldiers' wounds in hospital resembles the act of looking at specimens in a museum or archive, revealed one at a time, in catalogue-worthy detail: Briony the author and nurse is also Briony the archivist.

This archival quality of Briony's story is at odds with its fictive elements (which she stops short of completely identifying for readers), requiring

Briony to acknowledge the fraught relationship between creative writing and testimony in a way that moves towards resolving the ethical dilemma posed by crafting a narrative that is at once a testament to individual/communicative memory, artistic construct, historical record, and public confession. Briony knows that she "cannot publish until [the Marshalls] are dead. And as of this morning, I accept that will not be until I am" (p. 370). Once her novel is finally published there will be no one left to refute its version of the truth. But Briony also openly acknowledges that this account of the truth is fabricated: "I know there's always a certain kind of reader who will be compelled to ask, But what *really* happened? The answer is simple: the lovers survive and flourish. As long as there is a single copy, a solitary typescript of my final draft, then my spontaneous, fortuitous sister and her medical prince survive to love" (p. 371). Since Briony knows that her novel will constitute the only written record of Paul Marshall's rape of Lola (though her reference to earlier drafts and the alternate truths they may contain destabilizes the notion of the novel as vehicle of cultural memory even further), her choice to acknowledge this fact is at least ethical in its acknowledgement of the silences of those primarily impacted by the initial trauma and its future reverberations.

Her deployment of metafictional devices—from the metagothic in Part One to the entirely self-reflexive final chapter—constitutes an attempt by Briony to navigate the ethical challenges posed to the writer of trauma fiction. Once again the metagothic has a deeper role to play in the novel's interrogation of how contemporary audiences approach and relate to the traumas of the twentieth century from a postmemorial perspective. What, then, connects the novel's self-conscious participation in the Gothic with its problematization of received notions of cultural memory? We have already seen how the Gothic's emphasis on rigid conventions makes the genre well suited to Briony's exploration of the "ethical minefield" (Modlinger and Sonntag 2011, p. 10) that emerges from the fraught relationship between creative writing and testimony—testimony that, when fictionalized, always risks being bound by some degree of literary convention, whether through editorial choices, audience expectations, or the author's own desire, in Briony's words, to play God.[13] The answer to this question requires approaching the Gothic genre from a more sociopolitical angle.

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[13] Indeed, as Felman and Laub suggest, all testimony is subject to the limitations of perspective and can distort to some extent.

Here, it is useful to turn to the work of Robert Miles (2001), whose examination of the relationship between Gothic horror and British nationalism may be extrapolated in order to understand the role of the Gothic in articulating the impact of recent social and political catastrophes like World War II. For Miles, the supernatural as it occurs within the Gothic arises "with the violation of, not the laws of nature, but the 'laws' of the nation" (p. 65). His way of connecting nationalism with Gothic horror is to liken Kristeva's theory of the abject as that which threatens the cohesive self—an idea without which, Miles writes, "the Gothic cannot be fully theorized" (1982, p. 48)—to Slavoj Žižek's notion of the Other as that which threatens the nation. As Kristeva writes, the abject encompasses that which "disturbs authority, system, order. What does not respect borders, position, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist. … Any crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law, is abject" (1982, p. 4). The correlation Miles undertakes requires an understanding of the Lacanian notion of the "Thing," defined by Žižek as "[t]he element which holds together a given community" and yet "cannot be reduced to the point of symbolic identification" (1993, p. 201). The nation as a construct, which Miles likens to a kind of "false consciousness" (2001, p. 59), coheres around this intangible Thing, linking its members together in a bond that "implies a shared relationship" towards it and promises "Enjoyment incarnated" (Žižek 1993, p. 201). As Žižek explains, "[t]his relationship towards the Thing, structured by means of fantasies, is what is at stake when we speak of the menace to our 'way of life' presented by the Other: it is what is threatened when, for example, a white Englishman is panicked because of the growing presence of 'aliens'" (p. 201). According to Miles, "Žižek's Other is Kristeva's abject"; the sense of the disgusting or "excess" produced by the abject is projected onto what Miles calls a "convenient Other" (2001, p. 56), with the two becoming interchangeable.

As an example, Miles invokes the motif of the Catholic as a threat to the national narrative of Protestantism, recurrent in such eighteenth-century Gothic novels as Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* and Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto.* His tone towards citizens who might be seduced by the "false consciousness" of such national narratives is markedly derisive—a tone that *Atonement* mirrors in its epigraph, which disparages Gothic flights of fancy by subjugating them to a national consciousness that is rational, modern, and Protestant, all while critiquing, through its satirical

source material, the legitimacy of such narratives.[14] Miles's link between the abject and the Other that threatens the false consciousness posed by national narratives relates to *Atonement*'s treatment of World War II, to which England's national narrative is inextricably bound. The novel, as the work of a war veteran's son, is, as Crosthwaite argues, heavily invested in probing this "personal, specifically filial, experience with the wider movements of twentieth-century history" (2009, p. 159), as well as the role postmemory has in shaping it.

Specifically, Miles's analogy necessitates a re-examination of Part One's abjectified kitchen refuse. Considering the abject as analogous to Žižek's Other alongside the family as microcosm of the nation allows for a reading of the kitchen refuse and its connection to the tension-riddled dinner scene to follow as symbolic of the threat posed to the nation by the war, the build-up to which is embodied both in the absent Mr Tallis's time spent preparing "mysterious consultation documents for the Home Office" (McEwan 2001, p. 103) and in the success of Paul Marshall's *Amo* chocolate scheme. What results essentially in Marshall's substitution for Mr Tallis at the family dinner table implicates the war directly in Lola's rape. That Part One's scant references to Mr Tallis should be centred around his parental absenteeism during this scene of familial bonding seems to be no coincidence; Miles notes how in Gothic novels (specifically those by female authors, such as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*), such Gothic devices as the supernatural, horror, and abjection are "often focussed on the father, as a representative of the nation" (2001, p. 65). With World War II being an event often used to shore up a version of British nationalism rooted in paternalism and masculinity, the image of the abjectified kitchen refuse, by foreshadowing the impact of the trauma to the family (and thus to the nation) that the impending war poses, subverts such a narrative. The kitchen scene contributes to the novel's intense focus on the abject materiality of war (whether through the graphic detail with which Briony details soldiers' battle wounds or the severed leg of a child that Robbie sees perched in a tree) in a way that troubles the role World

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[14] Recall Henry Tilney's admonition to Catherine Morland to "Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English: that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you. Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them?" (Austen 1975, p. 107, qtd in McEwan, epigraph).

War II has historically played in bolstering the British national narrative of paternalism, replacing it instead with a narrative of national collective trauma.

Even more relevant to elucidating the role Briony's metagothic narrative strategy has in her overall project—and particularly in determining whether or not this project is ethical—is Miles's notion, drawn from Horace Walpole in *The Castle of Otranto*, of the abject narrator, which shares some amazing (one might say uncanny) similarities with Briony. Miles contends that by masquerading as "a Catholic gentleman who pretends to be a Counter-Reformational priest who in turn forges a twelfth-century text" (p. 59)—a ruse to which he admits at a later point in the novel—Walpole "assumes the position of the abject … as equivocator, a crosser of boundaries, a forger with a good conscience" (p. 49). Like *Atonement*, *Otranto*, Miles contends, constitutes Walpole's literary "experiment," which, like Briony's, is later "confessed," and which "transgress[es] the laws of literature" through a process of "blending"— for Walpole, of the ancient romance with the modern novel (p. 59). Miles terms this literary experiment "'aesthetic' abjection": the act "of bringing the law's fragility into question through ambiguous play"—in this case, the law of genre that dictates a separation between high art (i.e., the "controversial luxury" of a printed modern romance novel) and low (the "ancient romance, a species of 'writing' associated with legendary folk culture" [p. 62]). *Otranto* disguises the former as the latter, which for Miles "situates Walpole at the precise nexus connecting abjection, nationalism and the Gothic," since his literary ruse plays on the contrived nature of the idea of Protestantism as a defining characteristic of "Britishness" (p. 59). In addition to engaging in a literary ruse to which she later confesses, Briony, like Walpole, who "defends his hoax in aesthetic terms" (p. 62), locates the ethical value of her fictional testimony in the literary quality of what would otherwise, for Briony, be "in the service of the bleakest realism" (McEwan 2001, p. 371). Both the Freudian laws of trauma and the conventions of the Gothic that, in turn, structure the novel as a whole and colour its first part are narratives that Briony, in her literary deceit, at once exploits and transgresses. In this way, Briony embodies the aesthetic abject: a crosser of boundaries between fiction and testimony, exposing how postmemorial relationships to collective traumas like World War II are subject to narrativization that in some ways obscures trauma's material reality, however abject it may be.

Briony is duplicitous in her construction of Robbie and Cecilia's fate as a couple, her duplicity serving to disrupt the presumed stability of cultural

memory in a way that exposes how such narratives might be subject to various forms of intentional and unintentional manipulation, whether through embellishment or aphasia. As in *Otranto*, in *Atonement* "the usurper" (Briony) "is rendered abject" and "leaves [her] text in a state of ambiguity" (Miles 2001, p. 65), although this ambiguity (however unsatisfying, upsetting, or even traumatic it may be to audiences) is an accurate reflection of the outcomes of the transformation of traumatic memory from communicative to cultural. It is fitting that Briony should evoke the Gothic to foreground the constructed nature (and thus, instability) of the communicative memory on which *Atonement* as a vehicle of cultural memory is based; Miles points out the genre's role in exposing what in "the nationalist effort to construct a usable past is haunted … by what has been abjected in the process" (p. 67), while in her study of the Gothic as a means of coming to grips with a contested past, Beville (2014) argues that the Gothic has had a role in problematizing the notion of a stable history since its inception.[15] Briony's altering of the truth to form a more satisfying narrative is an enactment of a general theory of fiction in which trauma becomes raw material for story; her position as abject narrator, however, fits especially well with theories of the Gothic as a genre that is "analogous to trauma," since "its protagonists usually experience some horrifying event that profoundly affects them, destroying (at least temporarily) the norms that structure their lives and identities" (Bruhm 2002, p. 268). In exposing her literary ruse, Briony outs herself as a traumatized narrator whose experience of the trauma she has witnessed is only complete as it is being told to readers in all of its inconsistency. As Miles writes, "the Gothic is concerned with expressing, with throwing into a compromised light, historically specific material that was part and parcel of the construction of the Nation" (p. 68). By throwing her own testimony into a compromised light by the end of the novel, Briony shows how postmemorial relationships to trauma must remain conscious of the same ambiguities and inconsistencies that govern communicative memory.

As the novel ends and readers are left with the awareness that with Briony's death, communicative memory of the event of Lola's rape will be replaced with cultural memory in the form of Briony's dubious written

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[15] Beville argues that "[r]esponding to advancements in the philosophy of history … eighteenth-century Gothic countered the insufficiencies of historical writing by working to estrange readers from the past and to challenge the authority of the historical chronicle" (2014, p. 53).

narrative, the uncanniness that this knowledge produces renders McEwan's novel an interrogation of the forms of cultural memory that house the traumas of the twentieth century, which are revealed to be less stable than they seem. Ultimately, by calling attention to the constructed nature of Briony's memory of the initial trauma which led to her crime, setting off the chain of events that will eventually lead to the novel's publication, the Gothic inflection of *Atonement* destabilizes the dichotomy between communicative and cultural memory. This destabilization has important ethical implications: Letissier writes that McEwan's novel shows the devastation wrought by World War II to be "so absolute that there is no safe, exterior position from which the collective insanity of war could be related" (2011, p. 225). For Letissier, that "the narrative does not originate from the peace and quiet of an archival room but from the tortured conscience of Briony, who constantly reminds the reader that there is no adequate way for her to make up for her past error" (p. 225), is of prime importance, as it "eschews the present as a safe vantage point from which to put the traumas of the past to rest" (p. 226).

Briony's position, then, both as a witness to trauma and as a writer of fiction, simultaneously upholds Caruth's notion of the vital link between literature and trauma by endowing literature with a "testimonial function" (Letissier 2011, p. 212) and interrogates some of the problematic assumptions that accompany this link, notably that writing trauma should be inherently salvific. The dual position Briony occupies as witness-writer necessitates looking at how she engages with, manipulates, and exploits the figurative language of creative writing to tease out the complexities of its relationship to testimony, especially as the historical or legal record she intends. It is here we discover the novel's metagothic style as a means of foregrounding the way in which Briony's memory is subject to narrativization, in many ways using the trauma she has witnessed as raw material for the novel readers hold in their hands. Reading *Atonement* as self-reflexively characterizing Briony's experience of and witness to trauma as Gothic allows us to read the realization that Briony has authored the novel not only as a moment of, as Miller suggests, Reader's Trauma, but also as an instance of uncanniness: the kernel of the unfamiliar at the heart of the familiar that renders the novel itself (much like the Tallis home, the site of Briony's initial traumatic locus) an "unhomely" space. The revelation that the novel is Briony's own fabrication not only transmits her trauma to the reader, who is compelled to return to the scene of the initial event as Crosthwaite notes, but also renders Briony's entire narrative deeply

uncanny to the reader, who is forced to re-evaluate the sequence of events as recounted by Briony, and who is thus no longer at home in the text. This feeling of uncanniness is the root of the novel's destabilization of the seemingly safe vantage point of the present from which the past is narrated: as Briony reveals her memory to be marked by both aphasia and embellishment, the novel as a cultural artefact based on this memory is itself destabilized.

Briony's revelation that she herself has authored the novel causes her narrative to undergo an irresolvable split between what readers once thought to be true, and what has, with this authorial betrayal, now been cast into doubt. The resulting "doubleness where singleness should be" (p. 13), characterized by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick as a hallmark of the Gothic, brings Briony's traumatized psyche to the fore: the rules of Gothic convention to which Briony's narration of the events of Part One self-consciously conforms (the sham-Gothic setting, abject imagery, and uncanny home space) become symptomatic of Briony's anxious desire to circumscribe the chaotic (and arguably, given her declining memory, fragmentary) event within the organizing system of literary convention. Especially unsettled by this doubling is the novel's epigraph: while Briony appears to envision herself as a latter-day Catherine Morland (who in Austen's novel is rewarded with a happy marriage once she learns not to let her imagination run away with her), the sense of alienation from the narrative that the revelation of Briony's authorship produces casts a great deal of doubt on Briony's ability to atone through her writing for past sins, despite her assertion that "the attempt [is] all" (McEwan 2001, p. 371): a conclusion that seems rather facile. The literary (and specifically Gothic) style of Part One contrasts with the highly realist descriptions of war trauma in later parts of the novel, which cast Briony in the role of archivist, cataloguing the horrific wounds of the soldiers to whom she tends as a nurse. This contrast approximates the conflict between witnesses charged with the task of narrating the trauma they have experienced and the author as "God": a conflict Briony attempts to reconcile by faithfully capturing it. It is debatable whether this attempt constitutes an ethical act (as Briony seems to see it) or whether she has indeed simply "doubled back to [her] starting place" (p. 370).

Like the dubiousness of Samson Young's final confession for having used Kim Talent for his own narrative purposes in *London Fields* and the retreat of Liz Headleand back to the comforts of her upper-middle-class

London life after meeting with Mme Savet Akrun in *The Gates of Ivory*, Briony's defence of her attempt to atone for her sins against Robbie and Cecilia signals an opportunity for empathic identification with victims of trauma only to undercut this opportunity the moment it is presented. The awareness of such ethical ambiguity, heightened by the metagothic strategy that *Atonement* introduces, is one way in which trauma fiction may move beyond rehearsing notions of inexpressibility. This awareness will return again in two of Pat Barker's novels—*Regeneration* (1991) and *Double Vision* (2003)—whose evolving Gothic metaphors form the subject of the following chapter.

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Identification or Exploitation? The Evolution of the Gothic as Metaphor for Trauma in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* and *Double Vision*

So far, the works discussed here have all been written prior to the dawn of the new millennium. This chapter seeks to bridge the gap between twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary representations of trauma by considering as a test case two novels by Pat Barker. Barker's fiction has always been known for tackling personal and collective violence, individual and collective trauma, and for examining these issues with a critical eye focused on the kinds of discourses that surround them. Perhaps Barker's most celebrated work, *Regeneration* (1991), brings together these thematic concerns and puts forth a story that negotiates the fraught territory of the traumatized mind as it is theorized (and in some ways constructed) by intersecting systems of knowledge: medical, political, cultural, and personal. By centring her story on shell-shocked World War I soldiers, Barker is able to explore the effects of these competing discourses on our current understanding of trauma as an example of a hybrid assemblage, which, as previously discussed, "lie[s] somewhere between the natural and the man-made" (Luckhurst 2008, p. 14).

Barker is also known for incorporating into her fiction elements of the Gothic. This is not entirely surprising given her focus on the violent impulses that often underpin the relationships among characters that her work explores. This Gothic sensibility has been the subject of some critical attention, with varying degrees of focus placed on the genre's self-reflexive capabilities; Judith Seaboyer makes this the focus of her analysis of *Another World*, which, she argues, overlays its otherwise realist narrative with the

overdetermined tropes of the Gothic. Such overdetermined tropes, with their emphasis on the unspeakable, work within the narrative to comment on how certain discourses can serve to conceal rather than to reveal knowledge—to "[r]emind us," in other words, "that accepted scientific explanations may, in their capacity to repress, be no more than another set of dangerously consolatory fictions" (2011, p. 76). In addition, Amna Haider, whose analysis is very much in the Freudian vein, marks the Gothic landscapes of the *Regeneration* trilogy as metaphors for the dispossession and dislocation felt by the victim of trauma towards his sense of self, demonstrating how the physical landscapes of war "overlap and colonize" the psychological space of the traumatized mind (2012, p. 56). The potential for these kinds of Gothic tropes to address their own relationship to readers, who are in turn apt to recognize and categorize them as conspicuously Gothic, however, remains unexplored by either Seaboyer or Haider. Perhaps this is because the *Regeneration* trilogy uses Gothic tropes (like haunted landscapes and uncanny institutional spaces) in more subtle ways than Barker's later novel, *Double Vision*, which practically winks to readers in what often seems like intentional heavy-handedness.

Examining both of these novels together allows for an examination of how British trauma fiction negotiates collective violence on either side of the millennium, and particularly on either side of the cataclysmic events of 9/11. This chapter focuses on how *Double Vision*, which has received something of an unfair treatment by critics when compared to the highly acclaimed *Regeneration*, picks up on many of the explorations and critiques of the ethics of trauma, testimony, and healing that its earlier counterpart began, but with an added emphasis on the spectatorship that has come to characterize twenty-first-century witnessing. By examining how each of these novels uses the Gothic alongside one another, what emerges is a movement towards greater self-reflexivity and self-awareness that enacts on a micro scale what I have argued is a larger trend within the field of trauma fiction and literary trauma studies. Written in 1991 and 2003, respectively, *Regeneration* and *Double Vision* represent a shift from engaging with the ethical debates around testimony and witnessing, to rejecting ethical possibilities altogether, a move that could be explained by the highly mediated events of 9/11 that produced their own crisis of witnessing, and which feature prominently in the later novel.

Regeneration explores medical discourses of trauma in order to critique the modes of thought through which the idea of trauma is constructed.

Though much of today's literary trauma theory depends on a Freudian model of the psyche, for example, *Regeneration* critiques trauma theory's Freudian origins by contesting protagonist Dr W.H.R. Rivers's treatment of the Craiglockhart patients (which closely follows the principles of Freudian psychoanalysis) through various other characters. One patient, Anderson, calls him a "Freudian Johnny" (p. 40), while another, Billy Prior, has a difficult time accepting "'all the questions from *you*, all the answers from *me*. Why can't it be both ways?'" (p. 69). And though Rivers accepts dream analysis and the "talking cure" as valid forms of treatment (his approach often consists "simply of encouraging the patient to abandon his hopeless attempt to forget, and advising him instead to spend some part of every day remembering" [p. 36]), he rejects other aspects of the Freudian approach, such as hypnosis (p. 93). Rivers's approach contrasts greatly with that of his colleague Dr Lewis Yealland, who works at the National Hospital and adopts an approach that proves arguably to inflict even more trauma upon victims. The contrast is most obvious in the two professionals' treatment of muteness in their patients; whereas Rivers adopts a compassionate approach in treating one Captain Campbell's paranoia and Prior's inability to speak following his tour of duty, supporting his patients emotionally so as to allow each time to recover at their own pace, Yealland's approach seems to ignore the very concept of psychological trauma. As Rivers observes on his visit to the National Hospital,

> [c]ontact with patients was restricted to a brisk, cheerful, authoritative greeting. No questions were asked about their psychological state. Many of them, Rivers thought, showed signs of depression, but in every case the removal of the physical symptom was described as a cure. Most of these patients would be out within a week, Yealland said. Rivers asked questions about the relapse rate, the suicide rate, and received the expected reply. Nobody knew. (p. 300)

Far from the kind and empathetic ear that Rivers offers in his psychoanalytic approach, Yealland asserts that a sympathetic audience is, on the contrary, "'[t]he last thing these patients need'" (p. 305). These words reflect a privileging of medical knowledge over the first-hand experience of trauma victims, as does his assertion to his mute patient Callan that "you do not understand your condition as I do" (p. 309), something Rivers finds profoundly disturbing. Indeed, as Rivers stands by helplessly as witness to

Callan's dehumanizing treatment by way of shock therapy, he feels he is witnessing not just the physical abuse of the patient but also "the *silencing* of a human being. Indeed, Yealland had come very close to saying just that. 'You must speak, but I shall not listen to anything you have to say'" (p. 319). The climactic scene, which will later come to haunt Rivers's dreams, encapsulates a central focus of the novel—not just war trauma itself, but the question of who speaks for whom, and how medical discourses of trauma can do more to silence victim experience than to liberate it.

By interrogating early medical discourses of trauma from the perspective of historical fiction, *Regeneration* is able to comment on the politically delicate territory of how PTSD is in part a biopsychological phenomenon and in part a socially constructed one. Often, the novel presents competing theories of trauma as historically contingent. For example, Prior's father refuses to acknowledge the reality of his son's shell shock, telling Rivers "[h]e'd get a damn sight more sympathy from me if he had a bullet up his arse" (p. 78). Sassoon, despite suffering from PTSD himself, is similarly sceptical of the notion of psychological trauma; when Rivers questions him about throwing his medal of honour in the Thames, stating, "You must've been in agony when you did that,'" he responds "'*Agony's* lying in a shell-hole with your legs shot off. I was *upset*'" (p. 21). Even among characters who do accept the notion of psychological trauma, body metaphors are inescapable to their understanding of the phenomenon. Rivers, for example, uses the example of nerve regeneration after physical injury as a metaphor for recovery from shell shock, an attitude that reflects the early days of the developing theory of a mind-body connection in relation to trauma (p. 63). Rivers views the physical nature of psychic trauma, however, as a construction, evident in his characterization of PTSD as a rich person problem. Speaking on Prior's mutism, for example, Rivers remarks that "[i]t's almost as if for the … the labouring classes illness *has* to be physical. They can't take their condition seriously unless there's a physical symptom" (p. 131). This is not to dismiss the experience of psychic trauma, however; on the contrary, when describing the prevalence of war neurosis among men who pilot observation balloons and who are consequently forced to witness the ravages of war from a high altitude without being able to act, Rivers, in an anachronistic display of gender sensitivity, emphasizes the similarities between this type of neurosis and that suffered by women in peacetime:

That would help to account for the greater prevalence of anxiety neuroses and hysterical disorders in women in peacetime, since their relatively more confined lives gave them fewer opportunities of reacting to stress in active and constructive ways. Any explanation of war neurosis must account for the fact that this apparently intensely masculine life of war and danger and hardship produced in men the same disorders that women suffered from in peace. (p. 298)

This anachronism prompts even contemporary readers to reframe their understanding of PTSD, which still relies heavily on the Freudian model of psychology that views trauma as the result of a single impact rather than a prolonged experience. By displaying this sensitivity in Rivers, Barker shows how certain narratives of trauma can become obscured over time, and that we have arrived at our current understanding of trauma not by way of incremental accrual of knowledge, but rather as a result of competing scientific, cultural, and societal narratives.

The novel's critiques of the sociocultural discourses that inform our understanding of trauma occur by way of various characters' perceptions of the trauma from which they suffer, which offer a meta-commentary on the ways in which the concept of trauma is constructed. Critics have pointed out the problem within trauma theory of focusing too heavily on pathologies like PTSD, arguing that such a highly individualistic approach glosses over particular social, cultural, and historical abuses—ironically, the traumatic events themselves—that may be responsible for the subjugation of entire groups. Aaron Denham, for example, criticizes the privileging of psychological or psychiatric models and explanations that centre around pathology at the level of the immediate family over broader sociocultural and historical contexts:

Assumptions of historical trauma research are often presented and accepted as if all social groups experiencing historical trauma … would become prone to dysfunction or exhibit other signs of psychological or social distress. Diagnostic categories frequently compound this tendency by defining social suffering and political upheaval … as individual psychological disorders rather than considering social factors and the larger political-economic environment. (2008, p. 393)

Barker (1991) builds on this critique of approaches to understanding trauma that are centred on the individual in Sassoon's comment that "[t]he maddest thing *I* did was done under orders" (p. 17). This is a

salient point both within the historical context of the plot of the novel and for contemporary readers alike. Rivers's own observations of his patients are similarly relevant to today's readers (and may strike as anachronistic those who are familiar with the Freudian model of trauma dominant at the time). In conversation with Prior, who cannot seem to pinpoint one single event that has led to his nervous breakdown, Rivers corrects him: "'You're thinking of breakdown as a reaction to a single traumatic event, but it's not like that. It's more a matter of … *erosion*. Weeks and months of stress in a situation where you can't get away from it'" (p. 143). This remark contradicts the early twentieth-century medical consensus on trauma and contributes to the novel's meta-commentary on trauma as an issue that has proven to be much more fraught than was believed at the time that many of trauma theory's foundational ideas were being laid down. This is a commentary that will persist throughout Barker's work.

Barker's later novel, *Double Vision*, mounts a similar critique of how knowledge of trauma is constructed, with characters often turning a sceptical eye on their own condition. This is especially true of one of the novel's two protagonists: Stephen Sharkey, a war correspondent suffering from PTSD as an effect of having witnessed many atrocities over his long career, including the Yugoslav War, the Rwandan genocide, the War in Afghanistan, and 9/11. In addition to having borne witness to these instances of large-scale collective trauma, Stephen is also suffering from the personal trauma of the collapse of his marriage, as well as the death of his best friend, photographer Ben Frobisher. But despite all of this, Stephen is reluctant to accept the idea of his being traumatized. He downplays, for example, the private trauma of the failure of his marriage because he believes it should, in theory, pale in comparison with the large-scale trauma of 9/11 that happens to unfold at the same time, even though he continues to experience intrusive memories of the phone conversation from his wife that effectively ends their marriage, which he receives while in New York City covering the attacks. Nonetheless, the after-effects of the violence he has encountered while on assignment come to the fore regularly in otherwise innocuous everyday situations, like when his young nephew's mention of roadkill provokes flashbacks to the Rwandan genocide and a strong desire "to be indoors, somewhere safe, away from the memories of long grass and the skulls you trip over in the dark" (Barker 2003, p. 41). Similarly, when he takes his girlfriend Justine and his nephew on an outing to a local fair, Stephen finds himself transfixed by the Ferris wheel, which he believes resembles "a great spinning Catherine wheel that

might at any moment be torn off its base and go hurtling and fizzing all over the sky" (p. 193). Stephen refuses to see the significance of the inherent threat he reads into the scene, claiming that despite the ride's resemblance both to an out-of-control firework and a medieval torture instrument, he is fixated not for this reason, "but because it was familiar from his childhood" (p. 193). Stephen repeatedly denies the clinical effects of the memory of the atrocities he has encountered, preferring to think of the intrusive thoughts and flashbacks he experiences as things that can be avoided by techniques of self-distraction, like his affair with the vicar's daughter, Justine Braithwaite, whom he believes (erroneously) will eventually lead him out of the cyclical repetition of his intrusive thoughts and flashbacks, in particular his recurring nightmares about a girl he once found raped and murdered in a Sarajevo stairwell. In some ways, Stephen's defiance of clinical understandings of trauma mirror Sassoon's denial of his condition, and both men's misguided positions on the issue reveal themselves in the intrusive thoughts and images that haunt them. But while *Regeneration*'s Rivers is the voice that offers alternative models of trauma beyond Freud, testing what works with patients in order to bring about a better understanding, if not fuller acceptance, of their condition, *Double Vision* offers no such mediating voice, indicating its more cynical point of view on the issue of trauma.

Critics have not yet considered the similarities with which *Regeneration* and *Double Vision* figure the impacts of the trauma that results from bearing witness to trauma; however, despite the stylistic and contextual differences that separate the two novels, both make similar use of Gothic tropes in ways that emphasize the damaging psychic impacts of encountering war. In the case of *Regeneration*, the Gothic provides a set of metaphors for characterizing the trauma that the patients at Craiglockhart have experienced as something that renders their physical and psychological geographies unfamiliar, that is, uncanny. Sassoon's hallucinations, for example, take on a Gothic quality. Despite his insistence that he is not suffering any ill effects from the battlefield, he experiences intrusive images of reanimated "'[c]orpses," "[m]en with half their faces shot off, crawling across the floor" (Barker 1991, p. 17). These Gothic manifestations of trauma will make their way into Sassoon's poetry as the "clammy creatures groping underground" (p. 34) that appear in an early draft of "The Rear-Guard." In addition to these living-dead figures, his hallucinations take on ghost-like qualities, as when he awakens in the middle of the night to find his former comrade, Orme, standing in his bedroom doorway:

> He wasn't surprised, he assumed Orme had come to rouse him for his watch… After a while he remembered that Orme was dead.
>
> This clearly didn't worry Orme, who continued to stand quietly by the door, but Sassoon began to think it ought to worry him. Perhaps if he turned his head it would be all right. He stared at the window's pale square of light, and when he looked back Orme had gone. (Barker 1991, p. 193)

Zombies and ghosts: both symbolic of a Freudian return of repressed trauma that reflect (despite his denial) Sassoon's fragmented mental state.

Ghostly manifestations of trauma in particular are not surprising given the novel's repeated characterization of both the Craiglockhart and National Hospitals as Gothic fortresses. Rivers remarks that "[n]obody arriving at Craiglockhart for the first time could fail to be daunted by the sheer gloomy, cavernous bulk of the place" (p. 13). The building's haunted atmosphere emphasizes the trauma Sassoon would rather repress, but which he cannot help experiencing when alone at night, locked within the cavernous treatment facility. He notes, upon leaving the room of fellow patient Wilfred Owen late one night, the building's distinctly Gothic atmosphere:

> The wind went on rising all evening. By the time Sassoon left Owen's room, it was wailing round the building, moaning down chimneys, snapping branches off trees with a crack like rifle fire. All over the decayed hydro, badly fitting windows rattled and thumped, and Sassoon, passing several of his "fellow breakdowns" in the corridor, thought they looked even more "mental" than usual. (p. 191)

In the dead of night, the patients suddenly take on an uncanny quality, and his choice of "fellow breakdowns" to describe them suggests that their exaggeratedly "mental" appearance is the result of a forced acknowledgement that they are Sassoon's doubles—his mirror images. Here the hospital's Gothic aspect serves to place Sassoon's trauma in stark relief, forcing him to face what he would sooner (in the light of day and in the company of friends) repress.

It is not only Sassoon, and not only Craiglockhart, however, that are portrayed as uncanny spaces. The National Hospital is similarly characterized, but this time reflecting the fragmented mental state not of its patients, but of Rivers. While on his way to witness Callan receive his shock treatments, he describes the hospital in distinctly Gothic terms:

> He took the lift to the third floor. He pushed through the swing doors on to a long, empty, shining corridor, which, as he began to walk down it, seemed to elongate. He began to be afraid he was really ill. This deserted corridor in a hospital he knew to be overcrowded had something eerie about it. Uncanny. Almost the feeling his patients described, talking about the experience of the front, of No Man's Land, that landscape apparently devoid of life that actually contained millions of men. (p. 299)

Like Sassoon, who compares the snapping of branches outside the hospital windows to rifle fire, Rivers, too, is reminded of the front (although he must rely on his patients' descriptions of the setting he has not witnessed first-hand). And like Sassoon, who is prompted to acknowledge his affinity with his "fellow breakdowns" as a result of the Gothic setting that emphasizes their position as his uncanny doubles, Rivers is being forced to acknowledge a similarly uncomfortable truth: that of his complicity in the system that has traumatized the soldiers for whom he cares. The fractured mental state brought about by this (quite literally sickening) realization is reflected in the uncanny eeriness of the institution that symbolizes the cruel revolving door of wartime trauma and dubious "recovery."

The characterization of both Craiglockhart and the National Hospital as haunted settings reflects the novel's wider preoccupation with Gothic spaces in general. When Rivers pays a visit to former patient David Burns after his release from Craiglockhart, for example, the pair walks the beach, upon which sits a military fortress that Rivers characterizes as a Gothic ruin: it looks "rather like a Martello tower," with a "dank high moat" surrounding it: a crumbling, silent edifice, overgrown with bindweed and giving the overall impression "of a dead place" (p. 229), covered in "golden tongues of fungus" lapping the surrounding trees and "a mulch of dead leaves squelch[ing] underfoot" (p. 230). Barker, through the narrative point of view of Rivers, invests considerable time establishing the ruined tower as a site of psychological fracturing, which acts, like the uncanny space of the Craiglockhart and National Hospitals, as a spatial manifestation of the shattered psyches of the war's victims, in this case that of Burns, who appears drawn to the tower like a moth to a flame. The scene foreshadows Burns's eventual attempted suicide, from which he is saved by Rivers, who discovers him huddled in the frigid waters of the moat. Interestingly, however, Burns is aware of the power of the Gothic to act not just as a reflection of one's shattered psyche, but also a tool of psychological distancing from horror. He notes that there are "all kinds of

stories told about … [p]eople chained up and left to drown. I think we rather liked that. We used to sit down there and pretend we could see ghosts" (p. 230). When Rivers responds that it "feels like a place where people have died. I mean, violent deaths," Burns responds, "You feel that, do you? Yes, I expect that's why we liked it. Bloodthirsty little horrors, boys" (p. 230). The tower, which acts both as a potential outlet for a youthful desire for terror and risk and as a very real manifestation of the horrors of psychological trauma, straddles two iterations of the Gothic— that which reflects the tortured psyche of the victim of trauma and that which allows for a pleasurable distancing from actual horror—a pattern that will repeat and amplify in *Double Vision*.

Though *Double Vision* will explore further the capacity of the Gothic to act as a distancing tool, it is first worth exploring the lines of continuity that *Regeneration* and *Double Vision* share in their use of Gothic tropes to reflect the minds of their traumatized protagonists as unfamiliar to themselves. These lines of continuity indicate Barker's interest in the Gothic as a metaphorical idiom capable of mirroring the psychological impacts that might otherwise evade capture by more realist techniques. The first is the trope of the desecrated body, whose abject presence frequently ruptures, for witnesses, the boundary between self and other in traumatic ways. In keeping with Julia Kristeva's theorization of the abject as a reaction to the threatened breakdown of the boundary between self and other caused by exposure to objects of defilement or "filth" that act as reminders of one's materiality, such as vomit, excrement, or a corpse (1982, p. 71), in *Regeneration*, the breakdown of distinction between subject and object brought about by exposure to dead and fragmented bodies is the primary source of trauma for the patients of Craiglockhart. Prior, under hypnosis, recalls a bombardment in which "flesh and splinters of blackened bone" mingle with the soil that he and his comrade Logan are forced to shovel into sandbags, and finds himself, in the process "staring into an eye" (Barker 1991, p. 140). This eye will haunt him for the duration of his stay at Craiglockhart and beyond, driving him to his mutism and eventual suicide. Burns is similarly haunted by what can only be described as the morbid architecture of the trenches, where the dignity of corpses is violated so that they can be "used to strengthen parapets, to prop up sagging doorways, to fill in gaps in the duckboards" (p. 232). The effect of being in such inappropriately close proximity to these violated and fragmented human bodies ruptures the subjectivity of witnesses; Burns, for example, who during an attack manages to get his head "stuck

in the belly of a dead German soldier," is unable to eat, becoming emaciated and metaphorically reduced in Rivers's descriptions to "merely the skin-and-bone casing for a tormented alimentary canal" (p. 27). The way in which images of the fragmented and desecrated body haunt characters like Prior and Burns indicate their loss of selfhood and unhealthy identification with the abject remains.

Double Vision makes similar use of uncanny remains that return to haunt victims of trauma, in particular to convey the psychic impact of Stephen's encounter with the remains of a raped and murdered girl in an abandoned building in war-torn Sarajevo, whose corpse returns to haunt Stephen in a series of intrusive flashbacks. As I have argued previously, these flashbacks follow what Emily Cohen identifies as the "transgressive … backward glance" characteristic of Gothic narrative (1995, p. 883, qtd in Joyce 2019). But this transgressive backward glance is also characteristic of the intrusive thoughts and memories characteristic of PTSD; specifically, what Stephen suffers from is guilt at having failed to rescue the girl from rape and murder, mixed with seemingly unwanted or unacknowledged desire, manifesting in the conventionally Gothic taboo of sexual contact with the corpse. These feature prominently in Stephen's recurring dreams, in which he envisions her head "beside his on the pillow" and, when he "roll[s] over on to his stomach, trying to get away from her," finding "her body underneath him, as dry and insatiable as sand" (Barker 2003, p. 55). Here *Double Vision*'s use of the Gothic convention of abject remains returning to haunt the protagonist is much in line with *Regeneration*'s— the material world (indeed, the materiality of human life that these remains represent) reflect the inner world of the traumatized mind as a "decentered site of instability and powerlessness" (Haider 2012, p. 59). The return of the repressed in the form of bodily remains, which enter into inappropriate contact with the victims who witness their abject status, come to symbolize the return of the trauma itself, which haunts its victims in a cyclical pattern of repression and return.

Another Gothic trope shared between the two novels, and which serves a similar function, is a preoccupation with uncanny landscapes charged with threat. Both *Regeneration* and *Double Vision* feature home landscapes that have been rendered threatening by trauma. In *Regeneration*, threatening landscapes appear primarily through the narrative point of view of Burns and Rivers, whose experience of the British countryside reflects their traumatized psyches. On one of Burns's night-time walks through the forest that surrounds Craiglockhart, for example, the muddy

ground appears as a danger that threatens to drag him back to the hospital, symbolizing the return of the war trauma that he tries in vain to escape: "[t]he mud dragged at him, he had to slow to a walk. Every step was a separate effort, hauling his mud-clogged boots out of the sucking earth. His mind was incapable of making comparisons, but his aching thighs remembered, and he listened for the whine of shells" (Barker 1991, p. 52). Burns's past trauma causes him to experience the forest as threatening; he starts to run, "but the trees were against him. Branches clipped his face, twigs tore at him, roots tripped him" (p. 53). That Burns does not consciously register the impact of his time spent on the battlefield, but feels it in his body, is telling, following an anachronistic model of trauma that is more closely aligned with Van Der Kolk and Caruth than with Freud. Burns's bodily rather than psychological registration of his past trauma reaffirms the Gothic's role in registering the traumatized mind as a "decentered site" (2012, p. 59) that emphasizes the victim's destabilization and powerlessness. As in *Regeneration*, *Double Vision*'s Gothic landscapes function as psychogeographies, manifesting the degree to which characters remain trapped within the cycle of repetition of their personal trauma. Some of the novel's most vivid Gothic imagery appears in the pages leading up to Kate's accident, which present the forest, like that in the scene of Burns's late-night walk, as a menacing, active antagonist. Readers are primed for the significance the setting will hold for Kate by the fatalistic image of a "blood corpuscle passing along a vein" that the narrator uses to describe the bird's eye view of Kate's car as it approaches the scene of her crash (Barker 2003, p. 2). Like the trees that "tear" and "rip" (1991, p. 52) at Burns, Here the forest is again described in predatory terms, waiting "humped in silence" (p. 1) for Kate as she leaves her house and then appearing, "rank upon rank of them, a green army marching down the hill" seemingly on the attack as Kate navigates the forest highway (p. 2). As Kate's car hits a patch of ice and leaves the road, the trees takes on even further antagonism, "loo[ming] up, lea[ping] towards her, branches shatter[ing] the windscreen, claw[ing] at her eyes and throat" (p. 3). In each novel, the prevalence of Gothic imagery is used to characterize the forest as a space charged with the impact of both Burns's and Kate's trauma.

Regeneration's uncanny landscapes manifest once again later in the novel after Burns's discharge. By this point it seems that Rivers, perhaps suffering from what LaCapra would deem "surrogate victimage" (1998, p. 182) after having listened to endless hours of patient testimony, has had

something of his patients' traumatic experience transmitted to him, following Caruth's model of witnessing.[1] During his visit to Burns, Rivers begins to dwell obsessively on the beach outside Burns's home as a "waste of mud, these sump holes reflecting a dim light at the sky," which, for him, seems transfigured by the wartime testimony he has borne witness to into something "like France. Like the battlefields" (Barker 1991, p. 239). He becomes particularly fixated on the "tangles of barbed wire that ran along the beach, with only two narrow channels left for fishing boats and for the lifeboat to come and go" (p. 224), though he is also triggered by the sandbags that have been placed along the beach to prevent flooding, and is bewildered that for Burns these seem to conjure "no other memories" (p. 224). Although Burns appears unaffected, his later suicide attempt during Rivers's visit tells otherwise, and the scene's generally bleak and oppressive atmosphere, with its emphasis on the "shrunken silver sun" (p. 228) that barely illuminates the deserted beach and the sound of yacht's rigging mimicking "an irregular heart beat" (p. 228), presents an outward manifestation of war trauma felt by both men and contributes to the mounting tension as Barker sets up Burns's impending suicide attempt. A similar effect is achieved in *Double Vision*: mist rolls in "like a pad soaked in chloroform pressed down suddenly over nose and mouth" (Barker 2003, p. 293), and oblique references to the smoking chimneys and barbed-wire fences of Nazi death camps that mark the farmland, which has recently undergone a massive livestock cull to prevent the spread of hoof-and-mouth disease, echo the tangles of barbed wire on the beach near Rivers's home, charging *Double Vision*'s otherwise pastoral settings, like those of *Regeneration*, with reflections of the traumas of the twentieth century. Dead animals litter the landscape of both novels, whether it be the piles of roadkill that mark the highways of *Double Vision* or the bodies of moles and other small creatures that Burns finds hanging in a tree (Barker 1991, p. 52). Even birds watch over the menacing landscapes of each novel in similar ways; on Rivers's visit to Burns, he remarks that "[e]ven the seabirds seemed grounded, huddled in the lee of the boats, watching the town with unblinking amber eyes" (Barker 1991, p. 235), while in *Double Vision*, vaguely menacing seagulls survey with "rapacious

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[1] Recall Caruth's contention that testimony is "an act that does not precisely awaken the self, but, rather, *passes the awakening on to others*" (1996, p. 107, original emphasis), that is, that the act of testimony constitutes "not an understanding" of trauma, "but a transmission" (p. 106).

golden eyes" (Barker 2003, p. 174) the actions of the human characters below. Here otherwise innocuous landscapes (Rivers and his patients are, after all, in positions of relative safety from the war that rages in France, and Kate, too, is in no real danger, despite feeling like she is constantly being watched, even by the statues she is working on) are rendered threatening by way of the victims' recollections and impressions of trauma.

Additionally, both novels link their threatening, Gothic atmospheres to a bloody history that is written into the landscape, tying twentieth-century violence to a long legacy of bloodshed. In *Regeneration*, this theme manifests in a conversation between Sassoon and Owen, in which Owen reflects on what he characterizes as the terrifying yet sublime experience of trench warfare:

> Sometimes when you're alone, in the trenches, I mean, at night you get the sense of something *ancient*. As if the trenches had always been there. You know one trench we held, it had skulls in the side. You looked back along and… Like mushrooms. And do you know, it was actually *easier* to believe they were men from Marlborough's army than to think they'd been alive two years ago. It's as if all other wars had somehow … distilled themselves into this war. (Barker 1991, p. 114)

Sassoon responds with a "similar experience" in which he watches "the limbers against the skyline, and the flares going up. What you see every night. Only I seemed to be seeing it from the future. A hundred years from now they'll still be ploughing up skulls. And I seemed to be in that time and looking back. I think I saw our ghosts'" (p. 114). The imagery recalls that of Drabble's *The Gates of Ivory*: the "terrible pyramids" of skulls that "mingle" with "the tourist mausoleums of Auschwitz and Jerusalem, of film-footage from the liberation of the death camps, of the unfilmed atrocities of Tamburlaine" in Stephen Cox's dreams, prompting feelings of disorientation that lead him to question whether the images are "really real" (1991, p. 226). The scenarios witnessed by Owen and Sassoon offer sublime accounts of a bloody history that is written onto the war-torn landscape, with the trenches becoming a macabre counting house, enumerating the deaths that have marked European history for centuries and will continue to mark it for centuries to come.

Double Vision picks up on this motif with Ben's photographs of pastoral England, which, readers are told, are "supposed to be peaceful … a break from the subjects he spent most of his life pursuing, but they weren't. You

always knew, looking at these empty fields, these miles of white sand with marram grass waving in the wind, that somewhere, close at hand, but outside the frame, a murder had been committed" (Barker 2003, pp. 64–65). The phrase "outside the frame" is significant here; Ben's photographs, while seemingly peaceful, mask a trauma that exceeds the frame of reference of the witness (which could be taken here to mean Ben, whose war photography has led him to witness much in the way of traumatic subject matter, or Kate, who continues to grieve the death of her husband). These are Kate's impressions of her husband's work, but they are compounded by Stephen's later in the novel, which, in a way that is perhaps symptomatic of the bloody violence that he himself has witnessed over many years as a war correspondent, add an additional level of awareness of their historical layers of violence. On his way to what is meant to be a restorative holiday to the Farne Islands for himself and Justine, he remarks on the passing scenery:

> Border country. That's why Ben had loved it and photographed it so obsessively, Stephen thought, because he came back from whatever war he'd been covering to a place where every blade of grass had been fought over, time and time again, for centuries, and now the shouts and cries, the clash of swords on shields had faded into silence, leaving only sunlight heaving on acres of grass, and a curlew crying. (pp. 236–237)

As I have argued elsewhere, Stephen's impressions are in keeping with the "fearful sense of inheritance in time" that Chris Baldick identifies as one of the defining features of Gothic narrative (1992, p. xix, qtd in Joyce 2019). It is also in keeping with *Regeneration*'s sublime characterization of the trenches, which, for Owen and Sassoon, both links the current war to a violent past and anticipates further violence to come. Similarly, Ben Frobisher's deceivingly bucolic photographs evoke in Kate and Stephen's minds (which seem to function almost as one) the ghosts of the past that intrude on what should otherwise be a peaceful scene. In the case of both *Regeneration* and *Double Vision*, being the victim of war trauma transfigures the landscape into an often terrifyingly sublime, always uncanny space that evokes the tendency of traumatic events to exceed the frame of reference of witnesses.

Perhaps the most intriguing image shared between the two novels, one that combines the preoccupation with bloody history and the tendency of trauma to exceed the victim's frame of reference, is that of marram grass.

As mentioned, *Double Vision's* protagonist, Stephen, attempts to heal from past trauma by way of engaging in a romantic partnership. *Regeneration*, too, features a character, who seeks healing through a love affair, namely Prior, whose relationship with love interest Sarah Lumb mirrors the more escapist element of Stephen's relationship with Justine. After meeting in Edinburgh, the pair engages in a romance that, like Stephen's infatuation with Justine, has an apparent healing effect on Prior. In one scene, the two escape to a beach that is, at least on the surface, decidedly less threatening than the cod-strewn, barbed-wire choked, and sandbag-filled seaside that Burns and Rivers visit. But the scene of healing is interrupted when Prior injures himself: "He snatched her hand and started to run with her towards the shelter of some bushes. Scrambling up the last slope, he staggered, and would have fallen if he hadn't grabbed a clump of marram grass. He felt a sharp pain, and, bringing his hand up, saw a smear of blood on the palm" (Barker 1991, p. 173). This passage might not give a moment's pause to readers unfamiliar with the significance of marram grass in Barker's later novel. *Double Vision* establishes the image's connection to hidden trauma through Kate's point of view as she sorts through Ben's deceivingly pastoral photographs. Barker later echoes its ominous connotations in the final scene of the novel, only this time from the detached perspective of the narrator overlooking Stephen and Justine: "Then he put his arm around her shoulders and they walked on, half in the water, half on land, while behind them the sun rose above the dunes, casting fine blue shadows of marram grass on to the white sand" (Barker 2003, p. 307). Since the initial mention of marram grass is from Kate's narrative perspective (which fades considerably over the course of the novel in favour of Stephen's point of view), the moment marks an intrusion of Kate's narrative into Stephen's in a way that extends the interpenetration of past and present to the narrative structure of the text, pointing, as I argue in Joyce 2019, towards the Gothic's "blind spot of a foreign/alien traumatic past … which has returned to haunt the present and future of narration" (Koustinoudi 2012, p. 23). Recurring just as readers should be most convinced of Stephen's recovery, the image prompts a return to the initial scene of Kate's reflecting on the sense of unease present in Ben's photographs. In both *Regeneration* and *Double Vision*, the superficially soothing pastoral image of healing with which the novels leave readers belies the recurrence of an unacknowledged trauma that will inevitably return to haunt the novel's characters. The main difference is that in *Regeneration*'s case, the recurrence of trauma is made explicit by the

symbolism of the blood that appears on Prior's hand, and indeed, while Prior is granted permanent home service rather than return to the battlefield, allowing him to pursue his relationship with Sarah more fully, the two remain sceptical about the healing power of love as they move forward with their relationship. Readers of *Double Vision*, by contrast, must rely on their prior knowledge of the symbolism of the marram grass (the trauma that remains hidden from the novel's central characters) to determine the true implications of the novel's ending, which on the surface appears to resolve itself happily, but in truth (and not without dramatic irony) signals further suffering to come for Stephen and Justine. Here *Double Vision* diverges from *Regeneration*, but in a way that continues the earlier novel's work with regard to attitudes towards trauma and recovery, with the later novel focusing not just on trauma *per se* but on the impact of trauma on narration, thus probing the limits of trauma fiction itself.

Although these similarities indicate a line of continuity between these two seemingly very different novels, *Double Vision* in many ways continues the work that *Regeneration* set out to do in questioning the role of the witness, only this time mounting an even more explicit critique of trauma theory's assumptions of the ethical motivations that underlie witnessing and going as far as to suggest, through the novel's use of Gothic tropes, a voyeuristic force at the heart of certain kinds of witnessing—a witnessing that becomes, in essence, a malevolent act of spectatorship.

Returning to Barker's earlier novel, in addition to exploring the various systems of knowledge that form the lens through which early trauma theory was constructed, *Regeneration* also, from a metafictional perspective, tackles the ethical issues surrounding the act of bearing witness to this trauma, which weigh heavily on the witness and might even constitute a form of trauma in itself. Rivers, for example, like the observation balloon crews he describes, is seen witnessing from above first the arrival of Sassoon and then of Captain Graves: "He looked down and saw a taxi turn into the drive. Perhaps this was the errant Captain Graves arriving at last? Yes, there was Sassoon, too impatient to wait indoors, running down the steps to meet him" (Barker 1991, p. 27). And like these pilots, who, "floating helplessly above the battle-fields, unable either to avoid attack or to defend themselves effectively against it, showed the highest incidence of breakdown of any service" (p. 297), this repeated act of bearing witness to the trauma of others is its own form of trauma, as Rivers finds himself similarly paralysed by his inability to effectively do much to help his patients move past the horrors they have witnessed on the battle-

field.[2] He feels "almost ashamed" of what he witnesses from the window, as he feels Sassoon's entry into the building is a "private victory over fear" that he has no right to observe without Sassoon's knowledge (p. 13). He takes on an inordinate amount of personal responsibility for his patients' recovery, using the metaphor of a "soldier who has neglected to save his platoon mate in battle" to describe when treatments fail (p. 145), and this causes him an immense amount of angst, even prompting him to go so far, prompted by the late-night scream of a patient on the floor below, to wish, "not for the first time, that he was young enough for France" (p. 146). Rivers, it seems, is suffering from the transmission of trauma that Caruth identifies as being the inevitable outcome of witnessing. When one soldier, Burns, is at last able to impart testimony of his encounter with a decomposing corpse, Rivers notices how, "[f]or the first time, Burns had been able to put the decomposing corpse into some kind of perspective… Yet, at the same time, Rivers's own sense of the horror of the event seemed actually to have increased" (p. 245). But perhaps nowhere is the damaging impact of helplessness more evident than when Rivers observes Callan receive shock treatments at the National Hospital in London. Forced to observe the cruel treatment (which is nonetheless effective in eventually forcing Callan to speak), Rivers "couldn't bear to go on watching," choosing instead to "loo[k] down at the backs of his hands" (p. 310). Later, on his walk home, the impact of being forced to bear witness without the power to intervene is made clear:

> He started to walk round the edge, trying to empty his mind of Queen Square, but the images floated before him like specks in the eye. Again and again he saw Callan's face, heard his voice repeating simple words, a grotesque parody of Adam naming created things. He felt pursued. There they were, the two of them, Yealland and his patient, walking up and down inside his head. Uninvited. (p. 314)

Rivers goes on that night to have a nightmare about Callan in which Rivers, not Yealland, takes on Callan's torture, but with the electrical probe replaced with a horse's bit: "The corners of the man's mouth were raw, flecked with blood and foam, but still he went on, trying to force the

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[2] Rivers goes on to say that the high incidence of trauma among soldiers who man observation balloons "reinforced Rivers's view that it was prolonged strain, immobility and helplessness that did the damage, and not the sudden shocks or bizarre horrors that the patients themselves were inclined to point to as the explanation for their condition" (p. 297).

bit into the mouth, until a cry from the patient woke him. He sat up, heart pounding, and realized he had himself cried out" (p. 316). Tellingly, Rivers is conflated not only with Yealland but with Callan, emphasizing both the misplaced sense of responsibility that this act of witnessing carries (how can one watch without intervening?) and the idea that witnessing from such a position of paralysis is its own form of torture. The burden Rivers carries from bearing witness to the trauma of others, which goes beyond wartime understandings of trauma in anticipation of more contemporary theories of transmission by testimony, drives home the impact even the vicarious experience of trauma has the potential to have on its victims—counter-intuitively for the time, but in keeping with Rivers's earlier comments on the men who pilot observation balloons, the act of witnessing without the power to effect change is positioned as having potentially greater impacts than first-hand experiences where greater agency is available to those impacted.

What appears to torment Rivers the most is the realization that there is no neutral position from which to bear witness to trauma. His central inner conflict is between his training as a psychiatrist and desire to help Sassoon recover from war trauma, and the order to attempt to change Sassoon's position on the war so that he may be sent back to battle, and perhaps death. "'I can't pretend to be neutral'" (p. 22), he admits, and Sassoon, taking in at a glance the uniforms both men wear, agrees. Rivers displays similar moments of cognitive dissonance throughout the novel, as, for instance, when he reflects on his method of treatment: "Certainly the rigorous repression of emotion and desire had been the constant theme of his adult life. In advising his young patients to abandon the attempt at repression and to let themselves *feel* the pity and terror their war experience inevitably evoked, he was excavating the ground he stood on" (p. 66). Rivers acknowledges the hypocrisy inherent in encouraging his patients to *feel* their trauma, as to do so would surely, for Rivers, lead to breakdown. The neutral vantage point that as an analyst he is expected to maintain is in many ways, for Rivers, a façade. Much later in the novel, after awakening from his nightmare about Callan, Rivers reaches an epiphany about the absurdity of the implications of "recovery" in a wartime context: "[I]n present circumstances, recovery meant the resumption of activities that were not merely self-destructive but positively suicidal. But then in a war nobody is a free agent. He and Yealland were both *locked in*, every bit as much as their patients were" (p. 319). Echoing Sassoon's glance at the army uniforms of both men, Rivers acknowledges

that the system in which both he and his patients are operating has shattered the frame of reference by which he, his patients, and society as a whole, can evaluate sanity and madness, trauma and recovery, determining that there is no outside standpoint from which to evaluate any of these criteria, no neutral point from which to bear witness.

This realization that there is no neutral vantage point from which one can comfortably bear witness to the trauma of another is a concern that returns in *Double Vision*. But where *Regeneration* expresses sympathy for Rivers as he negotiates the ethics of bearing witness to the trauma of another as it treads the Gothic's line between confrontation with, and distancing from, horror, *Double Vision* places the ethical burden directly on readers themselves. *Double Vision*'s two protagonists are suffering from their own traumas, yet are embroiled in contemporary ethical debates that surround witnessing. As I note elsewhere, Stephen is obviously haunted by the events he has witnessed (including the Yugoslav Wars, War in Afghanistan, Rwandan Genocide, and 9/11), yet this does not deter him from using Ben's latest photographs to write a book about ways of representing war. At the same time, Kate is both fascinated and terrified by the hijackers of 9/11, who form the basis for her latest sculpture, despite their having indirectly caused Ben's death while photographing the War in Afghanistan. Both Kate and Stephen are admirers of Francisco Goya, whose *Disasters of War* series detailing the Spanish Peninsular War arguably constitute the first work of photojournalism, but caused the artist great pain to produce due to the gruesome slaughter they depict. Kate's and Stephen's fraught relationship to trauma as a concept (and its representation) as well as to the very real and personal traumas they have suffered enact a built-in critique of Barker's own surprising artistic choice, very late in the novel, to derail the story of Kate and Stephen's attempts at recovery and return to a normal routine with a random act of violence that remains unresolved: Justine's brutal home invasion and assault at the hands of an attacker whose identity is never revealed. Stephen and Justine's relationship is galvanized by the experience, leading to the rather jarring end to the novel, with the pair embarking on a trip to the Farne Islands with the intent of healing, both physically and emotionally, and Stephen expressing the belief that their relationship has finally redeemed him from the guilt he feels as one who has made a career out of profiting from images of the trauma of others (Joyce 2019). Though as we will see, the healing power of Stephen and Justine's relationship is based on a process of Gothic Othering in which both Kate and Stephen participate. The main

difference here is that while this lack of a neutral vantage point is a source of inner conflict for the ethical Rivers, *Double Vision*'s characters seem largely unaware of the violence that characterizes the forms of witnessing in which they partake.

While the two novels share many Gothic tropes in common, some are used to vastly different purposes, and reveal the evolving purpose to which Barker puts them—namely, to expose the ethical pitfalls of contemporary witnessing. In both *Regeneration* and *Double Vision*, for example, grim reaper imagery functions as a self-conscious Gothic metaphor, although is in both cases witnessed at a distance by the protagonist. In *Regeneration*, Prior sits on a bench under some trees on the grounds of Craiglockhart and watches "two patients carrying scythes come round the corner of the building and run down the grassy slope that divided the gravel drive from the tennis courts" (Barker 1991, p. 133). Prior comments on their appearance, noting that they look "almost comically symbolic: Time and Death invading the Arcadian scene" (p. 133). Almost immediately, however, Prior's self-conscious awareness of the overplayed aspect of the Grim Reaper as Gothic image is undercut by the very real implications of trauma of the patients wielding them: "Nothing symbolic about the scythes, though. The blades over their shoulders glinted a wicked blue-grey. You could only wonder at an administration that confiscated cut-throat razors and then issued the patients with these" (p. 133). Here *Regeneration* and *Double Vision* are revealed to share a certain level of self-consciousness about the relationship between the Gothic and trauma as it is represented in literature. But in this particular deployment of intentionally recognizable Gothic conventions, *Double Vision* diverges significantly from *Regeneration*, manipulating reader expectations regarding the trappings of the genre in order to then break them, and in so doing, showing the dangers of witnessing succumbing to mere spectatorship.

While the self-conscious act of witnessing in *Regeneration* suggests a tension between the act of regarding trauma and of interpretation by the witness (signalling that there is no neutrality in the act of witnessing), *Double Vision* goes even further to exploit the recognizability of Gothic in order to force a confrontation with the knowledge that interpretation *shapes* the very act of witnessing, often in problematic (i.e., voyeuristic) ways. This is accomplished namely through the character of Peter, a reformed juvenile offender, whom Kate hires as a handyman while she is recovering from her car accident. Despite Peter's recommendation by the local vicar, neither Kate nor Stephen can shake their suspicions of him, and

their repeated Othering of Peter casts him in the role of the Gothic dop-pelgänger, who traditionally serves as evil double and harbinger of death. The first image of Peter, recalling the patients of Craiglockhart, is one given to us by Kate, who observes, once again at a distance, a "young man wielding a scythe in the long grass between the headstones" of the local cemetery (Barker 2003, p. 8). Like Prior, Kate offers her commentary on the scene, emphasizing how "[h]e'd shown plenty of skill with that scythe" (p. 21) and associating him unmistakably with the Grim Reaper. Kate's uneasiness is echoed by Stephen's: despite Peter's "[g]ood looks, intelli-gence," and "charm," he nonetheless sees "something else, something that undermined them all" (p. 23). Kate's and Stephen's comments on just what it is they find so unsettling about Peter are tellingly vague, reveal-ing more about their attempts to distract themselves from what is actually troubling them (Kate's accident, Stephen's war trauma, and the death of Ben) than about Peter *per se.*

As I discuss in a recent article, this Othering process reaches its climax when, one night, Kate catches Peter, having broken into her studio, dressed in her clothes, and miming the act of chiselling an unfinished statue she has been working on. Kate once again voyeuristically observes the uncanny scene at a distance, and borrows from the discourse of the uncanny in order to characterize him as something akin to Frankenstein's monster (Joyce 2019).

> Peter Wingrave stood there, a torch propped up on one of the benches behind him, his shadow huge against the wall of the studio, but this was Peter as she'd never seen him before. Her mind grappled with the wrongness of the image, and then she realized he was wearing her clothes…. He looked ridiculous—and terrifying. Deranged. His bare arms protruded from the plaster daubed fisherman's smock. She was a tall woman, but on him the sleeves were barely past his elbow, and his legs stuck out of her tracksuit bottoms, bare legs, white and hairy in the torchlight, more clearly visible than the rest of him…. He was barefoot, his strong prehensile toes gripping and relaxing as his feet moved across the mess of white plaster dust. (p. 177)

Here we witness a divergence between *Regeneration* and *Double Vision*'s scenes of Gothic metaphorical association. While both involve victims of trauma (Prior and Kate), who cast others (the Craiglockhart patients and Peter Wingrave) in the role of stock Gothic figures, the two processes serve different purposes. Prior's musings on why the institution would

confiscate razors but grant its patients scythes to wield highlights the absurd irony inherent in the system of authority that dictates who is fit to return to war and who is not (as Sassoon describes, the maddest thing he ever did was done at the behest of his military superiors). The underlying attitude towards those Prior casts in the role of Gothic Others is one of sympathy. In *Double Vision*'s case, the emphasis is on how Kate (and later Stephen) rob others of their agency in order to serve their own purposes (the deferral of their own trauma in favour of a distracting and exploitative narrative). I have already commented on how Kate again offers her commentary on the scene, which imbues this image of Peter as doppelgänger with Freudian significance: for Kate, Peter is a figure "belong[ing] to a primitive phase in our mental development," that part of the self "which is objectionable to self-criticism" and, as such, is ejected from the ego as "something alien" (Freud 1995, p. 143, qtd in Joyce 2019). The "spasm of revulsion" she experiences, as though "he had indeed succeeded in stealing her identity," casts Peter in the role "of a deranged double, a creature that in its insanity and incompetence revealed the truth about her" (Barker 2003, p. 178). By characterizing Peter as an ostensibly primitive, monstrous being capable of stealing her identity and exposing her incompetence, Kate's description casts Peter in the role of the Freudian uncanny personified, priming readers to suspect Peter as the obvious perpetrator of the assault, later in the novel, committed against Justine—a crime of which, it will be revealed, he is actually innocent. What appears at first to be heavy-handedness in Barker's later novel in fact serves a metafictional purpose, establishing the novel's Gothic metaphor, unlike that of *Regeneration*, as a potentially damaging and condemning act.

Like Kate, Stephen, too, engages in a process of Gothic Othering that Barker shows to have ethically dubious consequences for the concept of witnessing in literature. While *Regeneration* presents us an image of the traumatized witness in the character of Rivers, *Double Vision*'s protagonist, Stephen, a similarly traumatized witness, is a far more problematic figure due to his tendency both to deny his traumatized condition and to turn to exploitative measures in order to avoid addressing it. While *Regeneration* directs the reader's response to trauma in its characters by way of Gothic metaphors, *Double Vision*'s use of the Gothic might be better described as a series of misdirections, first with its setup of Peter as harbinger of death and Justine's attacker (which turns out to be a narrative dead end), and later through its characterization of Stephen's relationship with Justine. These Gothic misdirections force readers to confront the ways in which

traumatic memory evades narrativization, though with a metafictional awareness of the expectations of the genre, rather than relying on unproblematized assumptions about the Gothic's ability to capture in supernatural terms events that evade the mimetic capabilities of realism. As I argue in previous studies of such Gothic misdirections, critics like Catherine Spooner have criticized the tendency to view the Gothic as "the sum of our repressed anxieties" or as a way of merely reflecting or responding to fear (2006, p. 30, qtd in Joyce 2019). In privileging the Gothic as a discourse with which to talk about trauma, we must also consider the genre's concern with "surface, spectacle and performance" (p. 27), that is, the role can play in *distancing* audiences from horror as much as confronting them with it—which is certainly the case for *Double Vision*'s Kate and Stephen. Drawing on the Gothic as a mode of voicing traumatic memory necessarily connects the act of writing and consuming literary representations of trauma with the *spectacle* of the Gothic. This link between the Gothic and spectatorship, which vastly complicates the use of the Gothic as a mode of expressing otherwise unspeakable trauma, is an element that is missing from *Regeneration* (which offers a relatively unproblematized model of the secondary witness as "surrogate victim" in the figure of Rivers).

Double Vision's use of the Gothic emphasizes its voyeuristic qualities, particularly through Stephen's relationship with Justine, which he sees as potentially healing, allowing him to move on from the intrusive images of the Sarajevo girl that haunt his nightmares. But Stephen's assertion that his intentions with Justine are "not exploitative" (despite his being taken with her youthful appearance and demeanour) is challenged considerably by his tendency to fantasize about Justine as a sort of perpetual victim. Stephen, on numerous occasions, appears to delight in the idea of Justine as constantly in danger of some calamity. Soon after beginning their relationship, he is captivated by what he sees in Justine as a look of untold pain. Though he is aware that his perception of Justine is likely inaccurate and definitely problematic—that he "must be projecting all these complex layers of pain and regret on to her" (Barker 2003, p. 60), his attraction to Justine seems to hinge on the impression he has constructed in his own mind of Justine as always somehow vulnerable, silently suffering, and in need of his constant care and protection—the care and protection that he was unable to grant to the rape victim in Sarajevo. This view of his young girlfriend builds over the course of the novel, so that in a scene where she

expresses frustration, he "watche[s] her brow furrow" and finds himself captivated by "that elusive expression of pain that was, he realized suddenly, the thing he found most erotic about her" (p. 165). In keeping with Stephen's painful awareness throughout the novel of his own problematic relationship to the act of bearing witness to trauma (established by his affinity for the works of Goya and his book project on the ways of representing the violence of war), here Stephen is aware of, and seemingly embarrassed by, his inability to resist projecting onto Justine what he wishes her to be, remarking that "[s]he was so strong, so full of energy and hope. What did it say about him that it was her capacity to feel pain that aroused him?" (p. 165). And yet, despite its troubling aspect, Stephen cannot help but conflate Justine's victimhood with an eroticism he finds irresistible; even as he engages in the act of consoling Justine after she is disturbed by the violent short stories that Peter writes in his spare time (another of *Double Vision*'s built-in critiques of the acts of reading and writing as witness), he finds it difficult "not to get excited by the smell of their earlier love-making and to focus simply on consoling her" (165). *Double Vision* emphasizes Stephen's tendency to slip from empathic witnessing into ethically troubling voyeurism by having Justine embody, for Stephen, a double of the Sarajevo girl: another Gothic doppelgänger who represents, for Stephen, the trauma he tries so hard to repress. Rather than allow Stephen to forget the Sarajevo girl as he expects to do, his relationship with Justine only conjures up her ghostly presence more often within his memory in ways that impede him from moving on. This is accomplished through imagery that strongly associates Justine with the Sarajevo girl (even the necrophilia that makes its way into Stephen's dreams). For example, when Stephen recalls the night he and Ben came across the girl's body, he emphasizes the darkness of the room, lit only by "a strip of moonlight that fell across the floor and reached the girl's eyes" (p. 53). Similarly, soon after his and Justine's first kiss, Stephen notices also how "[t]he moonlight caught the whites of her eyes. Something stirred in him, something nameless and irrational and a lot less healthy than lust. He smelled the stairwell in Sarajevo, and dragged cold air into his lungs. Her mouth was slightly open" (p. 94). Stephen conflates Justine with the Sarajevo girl again after she is assaulted by a random attacker, and he finds himself experiencing a kind of epiphany, though one that leaves readers sceptical yet again of the relationship's ability to heal Stephen as he so believes:

> That moment, careering down the steep hillside, knowing that however hard he ran he wouldn't get there in time, had taught him more about his feelings for Justine than months of introspection could have done. All along in the back of his mind he'd been aware of his priorities in life rearranging themselves without any conscious effort on his part. You thought you cared about that? Don't be silly. The girl. She's what matters. (p. 265)

The moment in which Stephen realizes he is willing to do anything to come to Justine's aid is supposedly a moment of "clarity" (p. 265) for Stephen, although in reality this moment of running as fast as he can to save Justine, knowing he will not reach her in time, seems to replicate his encounter with the Sarajevo girl; much like he was too late to do anything to save the girl in the stairwell, so too will he be too late to save Justine, and his troubling reference to Justine as "The girl" again casts her in the role of double of "the girl" who haunts his nightmares. Stephen conflates Justine with "The girl" for a third time when the two are in bed together during their vacation in the Farne Islands near the end of the novel. This time Stephen shows some awareness of his conflation: "He climbed in beside her and for a moment they said and did nothing, lying side by side, fingers intertwined. The moonlight found the whites of her eyes. For a moment he saw the girl in the stairwell in Sarajevo, but she'd lost her power. This moment in this bed banished her, not for ever, perhaps, but for long enough" (p. 302). But as when he runs to Justine's aid during her attack, Stephen's language is at odds with what he seems to actually be feeling; though he insists that the girl has been temporarily "banished," she seems as present to Stephen now as she is during his and Justine's first kiss, and considering that the girl is most present at the moment of his and Justine's greatest intimacy, for Stephen to credit their relationship with diminishing the girl's power over him is troubling, especially since his well-being seems again to be dependent on Justine's occupying the position of surrogate victim. Stephen's conflation of Justine with the raped and murdered girl, along with the previous intrusions of the girl's image into Stephen's thoughts, functions in much the same way as Kate's characterization of Peter as a sort of Frankenstein's monster: Gothic interpretation shapes what is witnessed, so that the act of witnessing is shown to be anything but neutral, and in fact prone to sliding into exploitative and self-serving voyeurism on the part of the witness.

This instance of doubling may at first appear to have little to do with *Regeneration*, but it in fact stands as a useful point of comparison between

each novel's characterization of the concept of surrogate victimage. In Barker's earlier novel, we see Rivers take on the characteristics of a victim of trauma largely as a consequence of having listened to countless hours of survivor testimony over a long career and, seemingly in what constitutes a breaking point for Rivers, through witnessing Callan's horrific treatment at the hands of Dr Yealland. *Regeneration* treats Rivers's increasing identification with the victims, to whose testimony he bears witness, as part of the inevitable process of sharing ownership with victim testimony that Caruth argues is a natural, even desirable consequence of the act of listening to (and, by extension, reading), narratives of trauma. The novel's Gothic conventions—its use of the sublime, abject bodies, menacing landscapes, ruins, haunted spaces, and Freudian identifications—all aid in presenting the mind of the victim of trauma as a defamiliarized, uncanny site, but in such a way as to unite the primary victim (the soldiers who have been committed to Craiglockhart) with secondary witness (Rivers) in the process of transmission that trauma theory has traditionally advocated but which has come to be seen as potentially problematic by LaCapra and others.

In contrast, *Double Vision*'s Gothic misdirections, which manifest most prominently in the narratives that Kate and Stephen impose on Peter (as harbinger of death) and Justine (as doppelgänger of the Sarajevo girl), play with readerly expectations of well-worn Gothic tropes by putting them to the purposes of narrative deferral: despite Peter's threatening presence in the studio, he is set up as villain only to be cleared of wrongdoing, functioning as the site of displacement of Kate's trauma; similarly, Justine's position as doppelgänger permits Stephen to rehearse the scene of one of his most powerful traumas, even though he is convinced that she is helping him to work through it, despite his efforts to convince readers to the contrary. Both false associations with Gothic doppelgängers—the harbinger of death and the living-dead girl—may be read not as acts of empathy, but rather as acts of false witnessing that exploit the conventions of the Gothic to serve the needs of the witness. Where identification happens with the victim of trauma (in *Double Vision*'s case, the association of Peter with Kate as her uncanny double and the association of Justine with the Sarajevo girl as a stand-in for Stephen's fetishization), this is far from an ethically pure act. If *Regeneration* calls attention to the tension between witnessing and interpretation, recalling the scythe-wielding patients observed and interpreted by Prior as "comically symbolic," *Double Vision* imagines what happens when this tension reaches its

breaking point, so that the act of witnessing does not result in an act of traumatic transmission as Caruth suggests, but rather robs the victim of their agency altogether. Justine's role as the Gothic double of the dead girl in the Sarajevo stairwell speaks particularly to the risk of voyeurism that underlies bearing witness to narratives of trauma. The tension that exists between Stephen's desire to save and protect Justine and the strangely intoxicating effect that her victimhood has on him approximates the conflicted position of readers of trauma fiction, whose role as consumers of aestheticized representations of atrocity problematizes their role as seemingly empathic witnesses. If readers of *Regeneration* are meant to occupy Rivers's point of view as a helpless witness worthy of sympathy, by *Double Vision*'s publication, Barker has abandoned this position in favour of placing the reader, now immersed in the post-9/11 era's media-saturated world of 24-hour news cycles, in the position of willingly passive, morally ambivalent spectator.

By comparing these two novels, we can observe a shift towards an ever more pointed critique of the ethics of witnessing and of the limits of trauma fiction in accomplishing its own ethical project. Even though, through its portrayal of war poets like Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, it is a novel very much about the process of generating art from trauma, *Regeneration* questions the limits of trauma theory's model of testimony as art and art as testimony. On the one hand, one can observe clear parallels between Sassoon's and Owen's experiences as witnesses to the impacts of war and the poetry they later generate from these experiences. For example, Sassoon describes "nodding off" on a public bench and waking up to a hallucination in which "the pavement was covered in corpses. Old ones, new ones, black, green… People were treading on their faces'" (Barker 1991, p. 18), an image that will make its way into "Glory of Women,"[3] and describes writing his draft of "The Rear-Guard" "in hospital ten days after I was wounded'" (p. 33). Similarly, Wilfred Owen's observation at Craiglockhart of Campbell, whom he sees "bent double and walking backwards" (p. 37), echoes the image of soldiers "Bent double, like old beggars under sacks" (Owen 2003, l. 1) that famously begins "Dulce et Decorum Est." And yet, despite these direct avenues between his and Owen's wartime experiences and their poetry, Sassoon does not think it is possible "'to write a good poem in a state of

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[3] "While you are knitting socks to send your son/His face is trodden deeper in the mud" (Sassoon 2006, l. 13–14).

shock'" (Barker 1991, p. 18). *Double Vision*, too, tackles the difficulties of creating art from trauma, this time problematizing the relationship between art from trauma, the artist who creates it, and the audience who consumes it. This relationship is problematized in Peter's disturbing short stories, which are characterized by brutally violent subject matter that in turn leads characters like Stephen, as well as readers themselves, to suspect him as the perpetrator of the later assault against Justine. One of these stories, which Peter asks Stephen to help him have published, about a woman named Andrea who teaches art to prisoners as a form of therapy (Joyce 2019). Andrea has her misgivings about one of her students, James (much like readers are primed to have about Peter), due to the disturbing images he paints, one of which is of a figure wrapped in barbed wire that reminds Andrea of the logo for Amnesty International, but she ignores them only to be violently murdered by James at the story's end. In one of *Double Vision*'s more metafictional moments, Peter's story prompts Stephen to contemplate the relationship between trauma narratives and those who consume them, feeling both "enormous compassion" for Andrea and the empathy she shows the prisoners whom she teaches and faulting her for "project[ing] her own values on to an image created by somebody else for his own purposes." Stephen's question of "whether he was not projecting his own values into the story, doing, in fact, exactly what Andrea had done with the paintings" (Barker 2003, p. 163), reads as a direct address to the reader, hinting at the red herring they are being directed to follow in relation to Justine's assault and the question of Peter's culpability. Here the act of reading is aligned with the same voyeuristic impulses that drove Kate and Stephen to Other Peter in the first place (an issue that is taken up again in the following chapter's discussion of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*). The "horrible fascination" that Stephen notes in watching Andrea bring about, through her poor judgement, her own demise (p. 163), coupled with the admiration he feels towards the quality of Peter's writing, reproduces the same attraction/repulsion dynamic that characterizes his relationship with the Sarajevo girl and with Justine as her doppelgänger. In this way, the story enacts on a metafictional level the ethical problems inherent in witnessing that are established in Stephen and Justine's relationship. Building from *Regeneration*'s focus on the relationship between trauma and art that is explored through Sassoon and Owen's poetry, which is proven to be both fruitful but costly to the creator of the piece, *Double Vision* offers a different angle, this time focusing on the risk writers of trauma narratives face of acting voyeuristically

rather than empathically; while Peter is capable of an impressive degree of empathy with his protagonist, Stephen is troubled with the "disconcerting ease" with which Peter also inhabits his villain's psyche (p. 163). As with Stephen Cox's characterization of Miss Porntip (Drabble 1991) and Briony's Gothic construction of Robbie as monster (McEwan 2001), Peter's stories show the act of representation to involve its own inherent violence: writing trauma fiction, it seems, involves a certain degree of "disconcerting" identification with perpetrators, as well as victims, of trauma. And yet it is this identification that renders Peter's story so intriguing, causing Stephen to respond not in the solely empathic way Caruth predicts, but with a mix of conflicting emotions and judgements.

As I discuss in "Gothic Misdirections," this particular story of Peter's is reproduced nearly in full within the text and functions as a found narrative, another convention characteristic of Gothic writing (Joyce 2019). Peter's stories and Stephen's reactions to them force readers to confront their own responses to Barker's text as a whole, as they are tempted to use his stories as evidence against him only to have their expectations undercut by his lack of culpability in Justine's assault. The "ambiguity in the narrator's attitude to predator and prey" and tendency to slip "into sympathy with the predatory behaviour they attempted to analyse" (p. 164) that Stephen identifies in Peter's stories could just as easily be ascribed to Peter's voyeuristic relationship to Justine, and to readers' relationship to the Kate and Stephen's Othering of Peter through the system of Gothic convention that allows them to so easily do so. In this way, *Double Vision* demonstrates a level of metafictional awareness that is only hinted at in *Regeneration* in the figure of Prior as he observes the men with the scythe and in Rivers as he surveys his patients from above and grapples with his feelings of responsibility for the trauma he witnesses. Emphasizing the duality of Stephen's response, which is characterized by both morbid fascination and utter disgust, Peter's stories show the frontier between appropriate and inappropriate responses to representations of trauma to be more complex than trauma theory's earlier ethical claims would suggest.

Regeneration, through the point of view of Rivers, demonstrates a concern for the ethical issues surrounding witnessing as well as how these issues weigh on the conscious of the witness. The Gothic tropes *Regeneration* deploys function to characterize the mind of the victim of war trauma as a site that has become defamiliarized, or uncanny, to themselves—an experience that extends not only to the direct victims of trauma, but to the witness to its effects in others, as embodied in the

figure of Rivers, whose experiences of the novel's Gothic landscapes and haunted institutional spaces is as vivid as those of the soldiers who experienced the trauma of the war first-hand. In this way, *Regeneration* shows the act of witnessing to be a traumatic event in and of itself, the psychological stress of which stems from the unfulfilled sense of responsibility for what the second-hand witness bears witness *to*. This is to say that, as well as being a novel about trauma itself, *Regeneration* is also novel about bearing witness to trauma. This is also true of *Double Vision*, as Stephen Sharkey, too, suffers from the belated impacts of the guilt he suffers from his inability to have saved the young girl from rape and murder in Sarajevo. However, while *Regeneration* does identify some of the ethical complexities of bearing witness to the testimony of another in an ethically responsible way, it ultimately conforms to the trauma fiction paradigm established by Caruth and the Yale School critics that sees the identification between victim and witness to trauma to be both inevitable and empathic at its core. This identification is characterized by the set of Gothic conventions that is shared between Rivers and his patients as a sort of lens through which they perceive the world in the aftermath of the war trauma they have seen or heard of, as the case may be. By contrast, *Double Vision* ultimately rejects the ethical possibilities of witnessing altogether, showing victim-witness identification to be a far more ethically fraught concept than one might assume from Caruth's model of the reader-as-witness. Here the Gothic functions not just as a metaphorical overlay to convey the traumatized psyches of Stephen and Kate as they grapple with the repurcussions of the traumas they have experienced—traumas that are both highly personal and tied to collective trauma like war and terrorism—but also as a means of exploiting vulnerable individuals, namely, Peter and Justine, as a means of deferring their process of working-through these traumas. This challenges the notion underpinning much Gothic criticism that the Gothic functions primarily as a means of troping a trauma that otherwise resists narration. The voyeuristic aspect of the Gothic in which Kate and Stephen partake instead problematizes the idea of trauma fiction as a purely empathic mode of writing. Thus, from *Regeneration to Double Vision*, we witness a movement towards a greater degree of self-conscious interrogation of the motives inherent in writing, and reading, trauma, with *Double Vision* offering an example of the more nuanced and complex work recent trauma theory is undertaking. By virtue of its deviation from realism and deployment of Gothic narrative structures and tropes, *Double Vision* highlights the degree to which audience responses to its traumatic

subject matter are shaped by expectations of generic convention and aesthetic, foregrounding the risks mentioned earlier by Modlinger and Sonntag (2011) that representing the pain of another presents for writers and audiences of trauma fiction alike (the "ethical minefield" [p. 10] and the danger of succumbing "to voyeuristic and arrogant spectatorship" [p. 9]). With Barker's later novel having been written in 2003, it is not unreasonable to suggest that this greater level of awareness and cynicism with regard to the ethical possibilities of bearing witness to the trauma of another might be symptomatic of the enflamed rhetoric and saturation news coverage in the wake of 9/11, which bombarded viewers with images of atrocity that, according to Susan Sontag, both arouse a "prurient interest" and "can also allure" (2003, p. 75). This is precisely the dynamic we see played out in *Double Vision* in Stephen's relationship to Justine and to Peter's stories—and in the reader's relationship to the Gothic Othering of Peter.

As Edmund Burke writes, "we have a degree of delight, and that no small one, in the real misfortunes and pains of others" and that "there is no spectacle we so eagerly pursue, as that of some uncommon and grievous calamity" (2008, p. 12), and *Double Vision* connects the representation of trauma with the duality within the Gothic as a means to both shock its audience and provide a comfortable distance from which the audience can regard its representations of trauma (Joyce 2019). In so doing, the novel troubles the claim put forth by trauma theory to restore reading as an ethical practice, showing any such assumption to be prone to the same drive towards spectatorial distance that characterizes the Gothic—a spectatorial distance that is first conjured up in *Regeneration* by Burns in relation to his childhood ghost stories about the Martello tower and that intensifies in *Double Vision* with Stephen's exploitation of Justine, Kate's characterization of Peter, and the novel's metafictional treatment of Peter's short stories. The evolving Gothic metaphors at work in these two novels show the act of reading-as-witnessing to lead not necessarily to an encounter with another as Caruth suggests (1996, p. 8) but potentially to an act of passive, self-serving spectatorship.

Regeneration puts forth a conventional model of the process by which witnesses to trauma come to share in the trauma of another through the act of testimony, with Rivers taking on much of the mental burden of the trauma experienced by the patients whom he serves. But Rivers also experiences a certain degree of identification with the perpetrator of trauma, which becomes most evident in the nightmare in which he comes to embody both Callan and Dr Yealland. This dual identification is the first

hint at Barker's interest in troubling the ethical claims trauma theory makes with regard to the reader-witness. By the time of *Double Vision*'s publication, we see this duality evolve into explicit cognitive dissonance, in which the reader is effectively blocked off from an unproblematized identification with victims of trauma by virtue of the sorts of problematic interpretations that can take place alongside the act of reading/witnessing—interpretations that the novel's use of the Gothic foregrounds. As I have previously argued, the cognitive dissonance inherent in having to negotiate the duality of *Double Vision*'s Gothic reflects Sedgwick's contention that in the Gothic, when the subject suddenly finds itself massively blocked off from something to which it ought to have access (like a personal past, or, in the case of *Double Vision*, an unproblematized identification with the victim of trauma), "the inside life and the outside life have to continue separately, becoming counterparts rather than partners, the relationship between them one of parallels and correspondences rather than communication" (1986, p. 13, qtd in Joyce 2019). In *Double Vision*, the relationship between characters and readers becomes, like the relationship between the Gothic subject and that thing to which it ought to have access, one of parallels and correspondences rather than communication; however, this absence of the kind of identification typically promoted by trauma theory is, in this case, productive, enacting the kind of self-preservative distance that LaCapra advocates as a means of combatting the threat of "surrogate victimage" (1998, p. 182) in reading/witnessing narratives of trauma (Joyce 2019). What emerges from a comparison of *Regeneration* and *Double Vision* is a movement towards a more nuanced use of the Gothic as a means of navigating the complexities raised by trauma theory's seemingly straightforward call for empathy as a responsive approach to narratives of trauma. The Gothic's suitability in articulating "the terrors of postmodernity" may indeed, as Beville suggests, be "rejuvenated in the present context of increased global terrorism" (2009, p. 8), and particularly in the context of the terror aroused by the post-9/11 Western subject's highly mediated relationship to atrocities witnessed at a distance—we have already seen this aspect of the Gothic at work in Drabble's *The Gates of Ivory* with regard to Liz Headleand's relationship to the atrocities of the Cambodian genocide, which she witnesses from afar, and from which she ultimately retreats, constituting an act of spectatorial failure. Here we see the Gothic mediating the reader's own relationship to the events of the text, but in different ways: *Regeneration* deploys Gothic tropes in order to

establish conflict between the trauma and art, witnessing and acting, while *Double Vision* delves further into these conflicts to challenge some of the dominant paradigms within trauma fiction that privilege the co-ownership of traumatic events through testimony. Instead, Barker's fiction, and particularly her later novel, demonstrates an "awareness of both ambiguity and the inevitability of ethical impurity" that Radstone argues is necessary if trauma fiction is to "continue to mobilize the concept of witnessing to describe its own practices" (2011, p. 88). Together, *Regeneration* and *Double Vision* represent the two possibilities of the Gothic as a metaphor to discuss trauma: the first primarily as a symbol of the unspeakable trauma itself, the second emphasizing a voyeuristic mode of psychological distancing. By representing the duelling tensions at work within the Gothic and trauma theory, these two novels reproduce the broader trend I have identified within contemporary British trauma fiction on a small scale. The following and final chapter of this book will present, in its analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, an example of how the trend towards greater critical self-awareness may be harnessed to combat the voyeuristic and often self-satisfied gaze of the reader-witness in favour of enacting a more authentic reclamation of the voice of the victim of trauma, not as a result of the trauma fiction paradigm, but rather in spite of it.

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Witness or Spectator? Gothic Interrogations of the Reader-Witness in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

If a progression may be traced in each of the six novels discussed here with regard to their depiction of traumatic subject matter and their use of the Gothic, it is towards a greater degree of self-referentiality and ethical wariness of literary trauma theory's overall aims. The first two novels, *London Fields* and *The Gates of Ivory*, make use of Gothic conventions (primarily the sublime and the breaching of thresholds/entry into numinous worlds, respectively) in order to capture the idea of a contemporary "crisis of witnessing" (Felman and Laub 1992, p. xvii) as it applies to unfathomably large-scale atrocities witnessed from afar and experienced in hyper-mediated fashion. Though *Atonement* does not leave this crisis of representation behind entirely, its metagothic strategies introduce a level of critique of the ethics of trauma fiction that is more conspicuous than in either of the previous novels, and this element of self-critique continues in *Regeneration* and is amplified in *Double Vision*.

The voyeuristic drive present within the Gothic and its implications for subverting assumptions of empathy in the reader-witness culminate in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. This novel goes the furthest in mounting a challenge to Caruth's idea of the text as a testimony intended to transmit its trauma to readers with the goal of provoking an ethical response akin to that of the secondary witness (that is, one whose experience of the initial trauma is second-hand). The novel details the coming-of-age of a group of clones raised for the purposes of organ harvesting. The protagonist, a clone known as Kathy H., testifies, often

with great difficulty, to her traumatic realization of the purposes for which she and her fellow clones have been bred. This testimony is marked by a number of Gothic conventions that convey the horrors of the speculative society the clones have been born into, which underlie every aspect of their everyday lives. The recognizable conventions of the Gothic provide the metaphorical language not only to convey Kathy's struggle to release her testimony but also to connect the collective anxieties raised by advances in genetic manipulation at the turn of the twentieth/twenty-first century to a broader pattern of contemporary exploitation and institutional violence towards vulnerable populations. But beyond giving voice to the ineffable experience of both personal and collective trauma, the Gothic conventions Kathy employs in her narration challenge Luckhurst's trauma paradigm. By strategically manipulating these conventions in a process of Gothic self-fashioning, Kathy challenges the presumptions of empathy that underpin the act of listening to (i.e., reading) survivor testimony.

As has been discussed over the course of this book, recent literary trauma theory (led by critics like Luckhurst and Radstone) has pinpointed the need to go beyond rehearsing the notion of unspeakability that defines Caruth's theory of trauma as outlined in *Unclaimed Experience* (still the major work underpinning the field of literary trauma studies, despite its detractors). This need is analogous to recent critiques by scholars of the Gothic (e.g., Baldick and Mighall, Spooner, and Wasson) who, reacting against the perceived increase in psychological rather than historical analyses of Gothic narrative, caution against the risk of coming to overly generalized conclusions about the Gothic, including its role in voicing otherwise unspeakable anxieties. The risk of critical stagnation plaguing both the Gothic and trauma fiction is one that the increased self-awareness and self-critique in these later novels, especially *Never Let Me Go*, moves towards overcoming.

Beyond serving as a mode through which contemporary collective anxieties find their literary expression (which each of the six texts discussed here does to a certain degree), the Gothic in Ishiguro's speculative dystopia also highlights the ethical issues posed by Caruth's model of trauma. Straddling the dichotomy within Gothic criticism that considers the genre either as an articulation of unspoken anxieties or as a method of psychological distancing from horror, Ishiguro's novel refuses to reduce itself to either. Rather, Ishiguro's Gothic functions as both at once, tackling the paradox inherent within trauma fiction that sees the genre as (like the Gothic) primarily a mode of somehow voicing the fundamentally

inarticulable experience of trauma. *Never Let Me Go*, however, arguably provides the clearest example among these six novels of a narrative in which the intersection of the Gothic and trauma illuminates, and moves beyond, the critical cliché of "unspeakability" that has come to define, link, and, indeed, limit critical approaches to both trauma fiction and the Gothic genre.[1]

Never Let Me Go follows a narrative structure that seeks to mimic the traumatic impact of protagonist Kathy H.'s fate as a cloned organ donor, which she struggles for much of the narrative to voice. Addressing the reader as "you" at the outset of her narrative places readers in what would appear to be the position of fellow clones who share a similar upbringing, allowing Kathy to withhold from readers (and, arguably, herself) the details of the programme that has been put in place to clone and raise humans for periodic organ harvesting. Through their early upbringing at Hailsham Academy, students are provided with only minimal, highly controlled amounts of information regarding the compulsory organ donations that await them later in life. Through Kathy's intimate retrospective narration, readers share in the experience of being, like the students themselves, in only partial possession of a knowledge, devoid of true understanding, that marks the coming-of-age of Kathy, her friend and rival, Ruth, and love interest, Tommy. The narration consists of Kathy's mostly idyllic reminiscences of her time at Hailsham, a school-cum-boarding facility for clones, though her apparent nostalgia glosses over what comprises, in Freudian terms, the unacknowledged trauma of the clones' origins and purpose.[2]

Contrary to the nostalgia they may appear to indicate, Kathy's recollections are in fact symptomatic of a certain evasion of confrontation with the traumatic knowledge both of her origins and of her destiny that haunts her and her fellow students. Kathy speaks, for example, of a donor who, "when

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[1] See Glennis Byron and Dale Townshend's contention, for example, that "[i]t has become somewhat of a critical cliché … to regard the Gothic as that which, at its most characteristic, conjures with the unbearable persistence of history, with a traumatic, painful and nightmarish past that, however deep our wishes, will not simply disappear" (2013, pp. xxxviii–xxxix). That the Gothic's usefulness hinges on its ability to voice the otherwise unspeakable links the genre to trauma fiction in ways that could risk dwelling on what LaCapra calls "the paradoxical witness to the breakdown of witnessing" (1998, p. 183).

[2] The term n*ostalgia* is used here in the emotional sense as defined in the *OED*: "[s]entimental longing *for* or regretful memory of a period of the past, esp. one in an individual's own lifetime; (also) sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past" (2016).

I was making conversation to keep his mind off it all, and I asked where *he'd* grown up … mentioned some place in Dorset and his face beneath the blotches went into a completely new kind of grimace. And I realised then how desperately he didn't want reminded. Instead, he wanted to hear about Hailsham" (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 5). Characteristic of the evasion and repetition that marks Freudian models of traumatic memory, Kathy's idyllic recollections allow the donor to temporarily forget his own more painful ones. She notes his desire to hear these same stories repeated again and again: "[s]ometimes he'd make me say things over and over; things I'd told him only the day before, he'd ask about like I'd never told him" (p. 5), seemingly as a distraction from his own traumatic past.

Traumatic memory, driven by competing impulses to forget and to return to and repeat certain events, affects both Kathy's own narrative and the characters who feature in it. Kathy returns frequently, for example, to Ruth's apparently strategic forgetfulness of a detail that, though mundane, proves to be a bone of contention between her and Kathy. The detail concerns whether or not a particular rhubarb patch on Hailsham's grounds is out of bounds for students. Kathy presses her on the issue, insisting that "[t]here's no way you've forgotten" (p. 202), to the point of driving a wedge between the two girls and nearly ruining their already fraught relationship. And yet Kathy exhibits a similar, if not stronger, desire to avoid certain reminiscences. Though Kathy recounts her memories of Hailsham in a fair amount of detail, she is also highly selective in what she chooses to tell readers, omitting arguably the most compelling details about her and her friends' origins and purpose and avoiding sustained commentary on the set of social circumstances that have given rise to her society's compulsory organ-donation programme. Instead, Kathy often hints at her possession of a traumatic knowledge that she has yet to fully assimilate. Recalling, for example, a question posed to Hailsham instructors by fellow student Marge K. at the age of nine or ten that risks broaching forbidden territory, Kathy writes that "[i]t's hard now to remember just how much we knew by then" (p. 69). Though the students may on some level have known that "a long way down the line there were donations waiting for us … we didn't really know what that meant," so the students' subsequent decision to punish Marge "cruelly" (p. 69) for asking the taboo question (which, significantly, is never revealed to readers) indicates the unspeakability of this knowledge, suggesting its degree of traumatic effect.

The traumatic nature of the truth about the clones' future explains Kathy's own use of tactics of evasion and misdirection in her narration;

avoiding confronting details that would aid readers in contextualizing her story conveys the impediments to narrativization that result from its damaging psychic impact. When describing her upbringing at Hailsham, Kathy maintains a point of view characteristic of the gothic as put forth by Beville (2014), wherein "a first-person narrator focuses on past events, which allows her to be present both within and without the narrative, to simultaneously remain actor and observer" (p. 185). This dual insider/outsider position allows Kathy to maintain some distance from the events she narrates, which seems to act as a self-preservation tactic: information that would be key to building a complete understanding of the clones' existence and social rank is largely withheld from readers, revealed mainly in the form of narrative digressions that do only a partial job of filling in these contextual gaps. There are times when Kathy acknowledges these digressions, as in the case of her memory of a moment in which she observes her instructor Miss Emily alone in a classroom, "pacing slowly, talking under her breath, pointing and directing remarks to an invisible audience in the room," which is followed by Kathy's insistence that "that's not really what I want to talk about just now" (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 45). Elsewhere, Kathy avoids disclosing contextualizing details until much later, as when she admits to spending hours scanning the faces of models in porn magazines, without explaining, either to her friends or to readers, why "[e]ven in the little adverts for videos or whatever tucked away to the side, I checked each model's face before moving on" (p. 135). Rather than reveal the reasons for her peculiar habit, Kathy delays, only letting readers find out four chapters later that she is looking for her potential "possible" (i.e., her DNA original), the disclosure coming at the same time that Tommy guesses her motive, when, after listening to Ruth rant about the "trash" after whom the clones are modelled, he says, "'it kind of clicked'" (p. 180). The effect thus reproduces the belated experience of trauma in the very act of reading.

Even as they yield to unacknowledged or partially acknowledged feelings, these moments of misdirection also reproduce, on a linguistic level, the resistance of Kathy's traumatic knowledge to narration. One such revelatory moment again involves "possibles," this time when Kathy comments in an apparently matter-of-fact way that "[s]ince each of us was copied at some point from a normal person, there must be, for each of us, somewhere out there, a model getting on with his or her life" (p. 139). Here Kathy's relegation of the students' status as clones (the novel's first explicit reference to their rank and purpose) to a subordinate clause enacts

on the level of sentence structure the knowledge that is revealed to Hailsham students as matter-of-fact and also in a way that downplays its traumatic impact, indicating the degree to which Kathy has delayed processing the knowledge of what awaits her. Despite acknowledging, in passing, such traumatic impacts as the discovery of the existence of their "possibles," Kathy avoids going into detail on how the students are educated about their future purpose.

The precise information conveyed to them by instructors, and their immediate responses to it, is merely summed up in one "odd talk" between Tommy and one of the guardians (p. 38); Miss Lucy, with barely controlled rage, tells Tommy that the students "'aren't taught about it enough'" and that "'she'd a good mind to talk to [them] about it herself'" (p. 29). This conversation in turn prompts Tommy and Kathy to debate whether it is true that the students have not been taught enough about "'[w]hat's going to happen to us one day. Donations and all that,'" with Kathy deciding that "'we *have* been taught about all that,'" but wondering "'what [Miss Lucy] meant. Does she think there are things we haven't been told yet?'" (p. 29). This moment constitutes Kathy and Tommy's only explicit childhood acknowledgement of the fate that awaits them. However, Kathy's conflation of the information conveyed to students with a *true* understanding of their fate indicates the degree to which their knowledge of this fate, while present, simultaneously remains unclaimed. Again, the inaccessibility of the memory of having been taught this knowledge manifests on the level of language, with the evasive "'and all that'" used by both students to refer to (or rather, to avoid referencing) all manner of horrors attached to the prescriptive organ-donation programme. Taken together, Kathy's fragmented memories and evasive narrative style highlight the clones' difficulty in narrating their traumatic awareness of their role in society. The aporetic nature of Kathy's narrative enacts the process of awakening to a traumatic realization that nonetheless continues to elude the grasp of the narrator-victim.

If Kathy's only partial recognition of her origin and fate evince "a break in the mind's experience of time" (Caruth 1996, p. 61)—that is, an event which is not fully known at the time of occurrence—then her narrative becomes an example of a space in which trauma is "reinscribed, translated, radically rethought and fundamentally worked over" (Felman and Laub 1992, p. xv). Kathy's narrative serves a testimonial, and thus arguably therapeutic, function (Kathy, if not free of psychological anguish by the end of the novel, seems at least to have achieved some sense of inner

peace from having shared her experience and ordered her memories), and so follows Luckhurst's trauma paradigm. But as with the five other novels previously discussed, *Never Let Me Go*, by exploiting the tension within the Gothic between the voicing of otherwise unspeakable anxieties and the voyeuristic appetite for the suffering of its characters, pushes the limits of this paradigm in order to problematize assumptions of empathy in the reader-witness.

Never Let Me Go is unique among the novels discussed here in that it avoids explicit reference to any particular historical trauma. Instead, it adopts a speculative mode that, aside from the inscription that locates the text in "England, late 1990s" (in keeping with the theme of millennial apprehension that, especially, characterizes *London Fields, The Gates of Ivory,* and *Atonement*), is conspicuously lacking in details that might allow readers to ground the text in a specific historical, social, or political milieu. Nevertheless, the novel's foundation in the late 1990s and its primary subject matter of clones and organ harvesting does engage with collective apprehensions surrounding the development and future of techniques for genetic manipulation at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first, aroused by the first successful cloning of a sheep from a mature cell. The novel could therefore be classified as an example of what Wasson and Alder term "'Gothic science-fiction'": a hybrid genre blending a Gothic preoccupation with "Otherness and monstrosity" with the "anxieties and taboo pleasures" of science fiction, such as those surrounding "the rise of global capitalism and national identity in a post-imperial world; the profusion of technology; the sanctity of body boundaries and the place of the human subject within the grip of the abstractions of law; and the threat of apocalyptic destruction of the human race" (2014, p. 8). Luckhurst supports Wasson and Alder's genre-blending, identifying the recent trend in literary criticism that "resists fixed spatial categories for genre" (2014, p. 22), and he sees this development as an outgrowth of increased awareness of the hybridity and heterogeneity of contemporary lived experience.

Ishiguro himself has been cautious in applying the label of "science fiction" to *Never Let Me Go*. He states in a 2005 interview that "[y]es, you could say there's a 'dystopian' or 'sci-fi' dimension. But I think of it more as an 'alternative history' conceit. It's more in the line of 'What if Hitler had won?' or 'What if Kennedy hadn't been assassinated?'" (Ishiguro 2005a). Still, he acknowledges the importance of scientific advancements to this concept, noting that "[t]he novel offers a version of Britain that

might have existed by the late twentieth century if just one or two things had gone differently on the scientific front" (2005a). In later interviews, Ishiguro concedes even further to the idea of *Never Let Me Go* as participating both in the tradition of sci-fi and of fantasy: in a 2015 conversation with Neil Gaiman about genre, he observes that "[s]ci-fi ideas have been used in all kinds of fiction," and he situates *Never Let Me Go* within "[a] tradition of what you could call *Nineteen Eighty-Four* science fiction: Orwell, H. G. Wells and so on" (Gaiman and Ishiguro 2015). The author notes that while "[i]n a more realist setting … I was really struggling … [i]f I made them clones, who were being harvested for organ donation, the story would work" (2015).

The hybrid nature of many of the issues *Never Let Me Go* explores might account for Ishiguro's hesitance in ascribing to his novel any one genre label. As Luckhurst points out, the issues of human cloning and compulsory organ harvesting that are raised (and facilitated) by gene therapies and genetic manipulation fit Bruno Latour's notion of the "hybrid assemblage": the class of phenomena (including such events as ozone holes, global warming, mad cow disease, HIV, and even trauma itself) that "lie somewhere between the natural and the man-made" (Luckhurst 2008, p. 14), tangling up "questions of science, law, technology, capitalism, politics, medicine and risk" and thus provoking contention and debates which cannot be resolved by any one discipline (p. 15). For Luckhurst, Latour's theory of hybrid assemblages helps to explain the emergence of hybrid genres like Gothic science-fiction, which force "a recognition of heterogeneity and artifice, that we do not live in discrete natural or cultural worlds but in messy assemblages and improvised networks" (2014, p. 33). The proliferation of hybrid genres, of which Ishiguro's novel is a part, may be read as a response to the recent acknowledgement of such messy, networked environments. The novel's participation in the Gothic mode in particular, however, is directly related to the distinctly Gothic tone that has marked discussions of genetic modification and biological enhancement from its outset, exploding in the wake of the cloning of "Dolly" the sheep (Wilmut et al. 1997).

The cloning of "Dolly" at the Roslin Institute in Edinburgh by a group of Scottish geneticists in 1996 provoked a fear-filled media discourse both in the UK and abroad. In a 2001 article for *The Guardian,* Jane Perrone explains the ban on human cloning announced by British Health Secretary Alan Milburn earlier that year: "There are many ethical arguments for a ban, including fears that cloning humans will lead to 'designer babies'

with genetic traits selected by their parents, or a black market for embryos, and the creation of a 'genetic underclass'" (Perrone 2001). Often this discourse drew, not surprisingly, from both science fiction and the Gothic. Charles Krauthammer, writing for *Time*, draws on a Gothic preoccupation with the abject and the monstrous, as well as the anxieties and taboo pleasures that Wasson and Alder argue inform both Gothic and sci-fi, to deliver a warning that is nothing short of apocalyptic. While he concedes that cloning's potential for good is "immense," its potential for evil is, he argues, "infinitely greater. But there will be no stopping that either.… The possibilities are as endless as they are ghastly: human hybrids, clone armies, slave hatcheries, 'delta' and 'epsilon' sub-beings out of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*" (1997). Krauthammer draws from the Gothic tradition's distrust and critique of enlightenment rationalism to express deep concerns around the potentially disastrous ethical consequences of cloning, likening the research team responsible for cloning Dolly to "Mary Shelley's mad scientist," calling the passing of an electrical current through the egg to spur it to start dividing a "nice Frankenstein touch," and referring to Dolly herself as "an epochal—a cataclysmic—creature" (1997).

The decidedly Gothic tone of the discourse surrounding mammalian cloning is not limited to media discussions. In fact, Luckhurst connects the cloning of Dolly to "a significant cultural extension of a particular vector of the Gothic since the 1960s, generated by an ongoing technoscientific, biomedical revolution which has profoundly disturbed the boundaries of life and death" (2015, p. 84). Both medical and political disruptions of these ontological boundaries, Luckhurst argues, have led to the arrival of what he calls the "New Death": a concept that describes the proliferation of biomedical horror focusing on the bodies of those who occupy (physically, politically, or both) the borders between the living and the dead (p. 84). According to Luckhurst, the presence in literature of "resurrected dead, remnants of the undead (zombies and vampires), androids, cyborgs … robots," and the like—what he terms "corporeal technogothics"—articulates the apprehensions surrounding the rise of technologies intended to prolong life, while revealing the Gothic's usefulness as a set of metaphors through which such collective anxieties may be readily and recognizably expressed (p. 13). The 2000 documentary "Playing God: Human Cloning" suggests that "[l]ots of monster movies are made about biology" (Halmoff 2000: 00:24:34–00:24:37), echoing this view of the Gothic as a mode well suited to articulating the collective anxieties surrounding genetic manipulation. Displacing these anxieties

onto a set of easily recognizable Gothic conventions allows for such discussions to take place obliquely, providing, as Catherine Spooner suggests, "a language and a set of discourses with which we can talk about fear and anxiety, rather than being reducible to whatever fear happens to be promoted by the media at any given time" (2006, p. 30).

Within *Never Let Me Go*, the Gothic's uncanny and abject forms connect this particular set of apprehensions to a wider discourse of fear and anxiety itself. Mammalian cloning, for the first time, brought the idea of the creation of a genetic underclass bred for the purposes of prolonging the lives of those who "count" into the realm of possibility. Cloaked in the conventions of the Gothic, this historical precedent becomes a metaphorical point of origin for discussing analogous forms of violence against vulnerable populations. Many of these groups form the subject of the novels previously discussed: *The Gates of Ivory* addresses Pol Pot's brutal exploitation of the Cambodian population (especially minority ethnic groups) for the purposes of increasing the wealth of the state, as well as the exploitation of the image of victims of the Cambodian genocide (like Savet Akrun) by individuals and corporations for financial gain; *Atonement*, in its treatment of Robbie Turner, explores the class imbalances that affect the likelihood of being accused of a crime or sent to war; *Double Vision* is haunted by the imagery of Nazi death camps and of civilian deaths in various late twentieth-century military conflicts and also explores the fetishization of the victimhood of women like Justine Braithewaite. *Never Let Me Go* may not address its forms of collective violence with the same degree of historical specificity, but its Gothic overlay produces an effect of translation through which the specific ethical qualms surrounding genetic manipulation may be connected to a broader historical narrative of twentieth-century human rights abuses of the type that appear in recent British trauma fiction.

Val Paape and Sara Wasson, for whom the ethical implications of cloning extend beyond the possibility of creating medical monstrosities, point out the impacts of genetic manipulation on human populations, who are prohibited from benefitting from these technologies due to economic barriers. Noting the economic ramifications of such technologies, Paape highlights the ethical dilemma produced by "the age of cutbacks to government funded health care in all industrialized countries," in which "research into technologies that would make possible the most difficult medical procedures at the most expensive prices continues apace. Given

the current trends, only the wealthy will be able to access these procedures" (1997, p. 33). Wasson echoes Paape's concerns in relation to the commodification of organ donation, which advancements in immunosuppressive drugs have rendered accessible, but only for those with money. Wasson identifies a "colonizing binary" within the organ-transplant trade (which occurs with various degrees of legal sanctioning and protection of "harvestee" depending on country), with "human tissue flowing from East to West, from poor to wealthy, from female to male, from children to parents and from marginalized to powerful" (2014, p. 76). The benefits both of the trade in human organs and of the advances in genetic manipulation that promise to facilitate them (and which form the basis of the clones' existence in *Never Let Me Go*) are therefore one-sided, reinforcing a trend towards the commodification of already-marginalized bodies in service of a privileged few.

But Paape also points out that the discourse about cloning and the potential ethical consequences of genetic manipulation on humans ignores its non-human victims:

> While the various media accounts mentioned that there are ethical questions concerning the cloning of humans, none elucidated what they are nor gave any hint that there might be serious ethical questions concerning the cloning of animals. In fact, the mainstream press mirrors the Western cultural assumption that anything done to animals in the name of medical or agricultural research is acceptable. (1997, p. 33)

For Paape, the ethical consequences of cloning animals are already concerning in and of themselves, given the countless non-human lives that are sacrificed in the name of furthering gene-altering technologies. Cloning is not merely a human problem, she suggests, but, rather, a mammalian one. By including the non-human alongside the human in her discussion, Paape connects the development and propagation of cloning technologies to a process of commodification of life that comes at all costs, though with the greatest cost being the lives of already-vulnerable populations—human and non-human alike. Paape's concerns point to cloning's significance beyond its immediate social context, and thus to its amenability to acting as broader metaphor for contemporary institutional violence and exploitation of the marginalized.

The metaphorical amenability of Ishiguro's clones has been discussed by Michele Braun (2010), who suggests that the "social death" the clones

suffer at the hands of an indifferent society constitutes "a form of genocide against a group targeted for termination simply because they are different from the other humans in the novel" (p. 69). She interprets the clones as models of colonial Otherness, calling the students "an allegory for good British colonial subjects, reticent, calm, and accepting of their fate," (p. 78) and argues that the subjection of the clones "invite[s] analogies to slavery" (p. 89). In addition to her own postcolonial reading, Braun draws on Margaret Atwood's review of Ishiguro's novel, in which Atwood compares the treatment of the clones to victims of World War II and the Holocaust,[3] to support a view of *Never Let Me Go* as an interrogation of the cultural construction of the Other more generally, in which the clones signify Otherness in its myriad forms, subjugated for the sake of "the people who count" (p. 71). Comparing the biologically manipulated body of the clone to the technologically enhanced body of Donna Haraway's cyborg, Braun argues that this post-human figure "forces us to consider if there is something essential that defines the human (for example, the idea of the human soul) or whether definitions of the human are more accurately described as socially constructed, as it is in the case for marginalized humans like slaves" (p. 65). Certainly the conventions of the Gothic (particularly with regard to the clones as uncanny doubles of their original counterparts, as will be discussed later in this chapter) are crucial to voicing the particular traumatic impact of the clones' Othering without reducing such discussions to the topical. The complexity of gene therapies and genetic manipulation as an example of Latour's hybrid assemblage demands a mode of representation like the Gothic, with its sociopolitical function and concern with the ineffable and breakdown of meaning. With its tradition of deferral of sociopolitical crises onto its system of highly recognizable conventions, the Gothic within *Never Let Me Go* characterizes genetic manipulation and human cloning as potentially unassimilable and traumatic technological developments, providing the metaphorical overlay that connects this hybrid assemblage to a broader narrative of twentieth-/ twenty-first-century exploitation.

Beyond reflecting specific anxieties surrounding genetic manipulation, the Gothic functions within *Never Let Me Go* as the symbolic field, upon which societal fears of the clones and their own sense of marginalization

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[3] Atwood draws a comparison between the clones, who create and exchange art at Hailsham, and "art-making children in Theresienstadt," as well as to "the Japanese children dying of radiation who nevertheless made paper cranes" (2005).

play out. Specifically, Ishiguro eschews mimetic realism in favour of distinctly Gothic spaces that reflect the clones' status as abjectified second-class citizens existing on the literal margins of society. The desolate, post-apocalyptic landscapes of *Never Let Me Go*, like those of *Double Vision*, assert a visual authority beyond setting in order to confront readers with a Gothic spatial manifestation of the clones' exploitation at the hands of late twentieth-century British society. These landscapes contribute to the aesthetic of lack that dominates the novel, with its descriptions of the "open" and "featureless" countryside that surrounds Hailsham, where the clones are cloistered for much of their childhood, and the "near-empty" (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 220) roads and rural landscapes that form the backdrop to their adolescence and early adult lives. Kathy, who as a young adult becomes a "carer" (p. 3) for clones who have begun the organ-donation process, describes the farmland through which she drives as being made up of "flat fields of nothing": a monotonous repetition of "field after flat, featureless field, with virtually no change except when occasionally a flock of birds, hearing my engine, flew up out of the furrows" (p. 287). The emerging sun shines "weakly through the greyness" of the featureless sky; the landscape, where marked at all, appears scarred by violence, with acres of marshland interrupted by "ghostly dead trunks poking out of the soil, most of them broken off only a few feet up" (p. 220). The imagery, reminiscent of the hostile landscapes of *Regeneration* and *Double Vision* that seem to contain the memory both of bloody historical conflicts and of recent events like the livestock cull, suggests a country marred by collective trauma, though, in this case, the trauma remains unnamed; "the early days, after the war," are referenced, but the war to which the phrase refers is left to readers' imaginations (p. 261). Both the featurelessness and the apparent but vaguely defined violence characterizing the landscapes of *Never Let Me Go* contribute to the novel's downplaying of the specific historical moment that mammalian cloning was developed, instead emphasizing its amenability as metaphor for a twentieth-century legacy of violence.

To emphasize the metaphorical possibilities of the clones' trauma is not, of course, to downplay its damaging psychic impacts on the clones themselves, which the novel's Gothic landscape also plays a role in highlighting. Film theorist Max Hollein describes the antagonistic nature of landscapes that work to "develop provocative counter-worlds," devise "a new relationship between the individual and nature," and "take up the yearning for a paradisiacal, beautiful, and fairy tale-like state; without,

however, forgetting the abysmal, the uncanny, and the mysterious that is always lurking behind such idylls" (2005, p. 17). This is precisely the relationship the clones hold to the bleak, seemingly uninhabited, and post-apocalyptic countryside through which they navigate, yearning for a return to the innocence of their Hailsham childhoods but always haunted by a vague sense of the trauma that they are unable or unwilling to fully acknowledge. Signs of their society, when present, emphasize the students' marginalization, as when Kathy and Tommy, returning from their failed attempt at acquiring a donation deferral from Miss Emily, remark on the back-country roads to which they seem relegated (but which Kathy nonetheless romanticizes): "I realised, of course, that other people used these roads; but that night, it seemed to me these dark byways of the country existed just for the likes of us, while the big glittering motorways with their huge signs and super cafes were for everyone else" (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 273). In a characteristic narrative move, Kathy attempts to downplay the horror that underlies the everyday existence of the clones, though the truth of their marginalization by a society that prefers to keep them out of sight and out of mind emerges in the sublime, glittering metropolis from which the clones are cut off. This is an antagonistic landscape that, like the predatory forests of *Regeneration* and *Double Vision*, throws into relief the characters' lack of power and imprisonment, only this time it is an imprisonment not only within the recurring presence of the clones' trauma but also within their particular social standing. The contrast between the obscure back roads and the beautiful but apathetic city, while downplayed by Kathy, highlights the social structure that sees the clones both literally and metaphorically diminished and overpowered by the society from which they are excluded.

In addition to the antagonistic landscapes reflecting the clones' marginalization within their society, the novel's uncanny interior spaces also function as a means of troping around the specific set of social, historical, and political circumstances of Kathy's and the other clones' existence. The novel's institutional spaces—Hailsham and, later, the Cottages—act as uncanny settings that symbolize the violence directed by contemporary society towards the marginalized, with specific social contexts again giving way to a Gothic aesthetic that situates human cloning within a broader narrative of exploitation of the vulnerable. Andrew Hock Soon Ng (2015) argues that "the Gothic has consistently depicted the house not only as a setting for the unspeakable, but, in less clearer terms, as a site that actually invigorates it" (p. 1). In *Never Let Me Go*, the "house" can be taken to

mean any of the several institutional domestic spaces through which the clones are shuttled on their way to becoming organ donors. In keeping with the Gothic's investment "in domestic space that has the power to unnerve, fragment, and even destroy its inhabitant" (p. 1), each of these spaces—from Hailsham to the cottages to the recovery centres that house the clones on their journey from primary education to "completion," is one incremental step through a system that erodes the agency of the clones through suppression and indoctrination in order to eventually destroy their physical bodies, one piece at a time. Scant on physical characteristics, descriptions of these spaces emphasize their symbolic function within the text as sites that align the suffering of the clones within a broader pattern of twentieth-century violence. For example, the novel's emphasis on institutional spaces aligns the social system mandating the cloning of human beings for forced organ donation with that of the Holocaust. Primo Levi famously observed the way in which the legal system was used to normalize and legitimize the horrors of the death camp, remarking that "it is in the normal order of things that the privileged oppress the unprivileged: the social structure of the camp is based on this human law" (1958, p. 44). Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman echoes Levi's sense of horror at this process of legitimation: "The truth," Bauman argues, "is that every 'ingredient' of the Holocaust—all those many things that rendered it possible—was normal; 'normal' not in the sense of the familiar … but in the sense of being fully in keeping with everything we know about our civilization, its guiding spirit, its priorities, its immanent vision of the world" (2000, p. 8). Bauman advocates a view of the Holocaust as an event whose occurrence, in spite of its inconceivability, must be reckoned with as an outgrowth of modern society. This imperative produces a traumatic crisis of assimilation: an "unthinkability" akin to that elaborated by Amis in relation to nuclear war. We can see such a crisis operating within the Gothic shadow world of *Never Let Me Go*, which imagines the human-cloning and organ-donation programme as a horrific, though utterly normal, product of the late twentieth century. Like the deserted landscapes that diminish the clones, enacting a spatial representation of their marginalization, the "homes" marking each stage in a clone's life—from student at Hailsham to young adult at the Cottages to donor at the so-called recovery centres—are recalled by Kathy with an air of nostalgia obscuring their function as tools for the clones' continued marginalization and oppression. The tension that results from Kathy's jarring matter-of-fact narration renders these spaces deeply uncanny.

For example, though Kathy looks back fondly on Hailsham as the students' childhood home, the darker role the facility plays in the cloning programme irrupts through her deceivingly rosy outlook. This is not to say that Hailsham is frightening because it is *not* "homely," but rather that it reveals its underlying horror in its duplicitous role as a state-sanctioned tool in ensuring the clones' compliance with their position as organ harvestees. As Titus Levy writes, Hailsham's insidiousness lies in the way it "constricts individual autonomy, stunting rebellious impulses by strategically acclimating students to their predetermined role in society" (2011, p. 5) and acting as "a place of both personal growth and shadowy restrictions" (p. 6). Hailsham's panoptic construction enforces these restrictions on individual autonomy: the school stands "in a smooth hollow with fields rising on all sides. That meant that from almost any of the classroom windows in the main house—and even from the pavilion— you had a good view of the long narrow road that came down across the fields and arrived at the main gate" (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 34). This geography leads to self-policing by the clones, a practice that Kathy recalls occurring frequently: she describes how "[q]uiet places were always the worst, because there was always someone likely to be passing within earshot. And as soon as you looked like you were trying to sneak off for a secret talk, the whole place seemed to sense it within minutes, and you'd have no chance" (p. 22). Eavesdropping is a common occurrence that the students accept as a normal part of everyday life: "For a start," Kathy describes, "you could be clearly seen from the house. And the way the sound travelled across the water was hard to predict; if people wanted to eavesdrop, it was the easiest thing to walk down the outer path and crouch in the bushes on the other side of the pond" (p. 25). Spying, too, is taken for granted as common practice: Kathy describes the difficulty students face in forming romantic partnerships, stating that "you didn't want to do it in the fields even when it was warm enough, because you'd almost certainly discover afterwards you'd had an audience watching from the house passing around binoculars" (p. 95).

The self-policing that Hailsham's panoptic layout engenders has a direct effect on the suppression of knowledge that, in turn, leads to the clones' internalization of the horrors of their origin and fate. Contrary to what its status as both school and supposedly nurturing childhood home would suggest (roles reinforced by the close relationship the students form with their instructors, whom they refer to by their first names), Hailsham's oppressive and panoptic qualities reveal the degree to which

the institution is in fact the primary mechanism through which the clones' knowledge of their fate is policed. Interestingly, Hailsham's layout produces a secondary effect that directly opposes the first: having been built in a hollow, the school is presumably invisible to all but those who venture close to its gates. The facility remains hidden, then, to the rest of society. Thus, on top of regulating the clones' bodies and minds in preparation for their future roles in society, Hailsham pushes the clones to the physical and metaphorical margins of this society, allowing for their abuse to take place out of sight and out of mind (almost certainly as preferred by future beneficiaries).

The insidious methods through which this surveillance and suppression of knowledge occurs (whether through omission of key facts on the part of instructors or the surveillance and policing of behaviours by students themselves) render Hailsham distinctly *un*homely in spite of its surface appearance as a nurturing environment connected to an ostensibly idyllic childhood and reveal the school to be little more than an ideological tool for the state-mandated cloning programme, producing obedient, assimilated subjects. Hailsham's formative influence on the clones is evident from their repeated attempts as young adults to locate the school after they have been processed out into the next stage of their lives. In a way that reinforces its particular uncanniness, Hailsham takes on a spectral quality, existing as a non-place whose presence is nonetheless keenly felt by the students who continue to be haunted by its way of connecting them back to their familiar yet sinister origins. Through the Gothic conventions of uncanny, oppressive space, Hailsham takes on a highly stylized quality, becoming a symbol of institutional violence through which the specific trauma of the human-cloning and organ-donation programme shades into lawful exploitation of the marginalized.

Unfortunately for the clones, their situation only deteriorates once they have left Hailsham for the Cottages and, later, for the recovery centres, both of which prove to be equally uncanny locations, undermining the sense of home that their titles suggest and similarly reflecting the clones' status as society's cast-offs. As in most other cases, where she reveals the harsh truth of the horrors underlying the clones' existence, Kathy establishes the particular unhomeliness of the Cottages in characteristic offhand fashion, initially characterizing the Cottage to which she and her friends move soon after leaving Hailsham as "beautiful and cosy, with overgrown grass everywhere" (p. 119). The phrase is oxymoronic, undermining itself in the moment of its expression, with her descriptor of "beautiful and

cosy" striking a discordant note with her post-apocalyptic evocations of the ubiquitous overgrown grass. The paradox suggests, if not an unwitting betrayal of her true feelings about the Cottages, then a sense of underlying horror that she is unable to fully express, and with good reason; the Cottages' general state of disrepair once again points to the clones' abject status. Kathy notes the freezing conditions that force the clones to keep warm by huddling under "old curtains, even bits of carpet. Sometimes it got so cold you just had to pile anything you could over you" (p. 127). When Kathy's new friend Chrissie indicates that it is "impossible" to have a private conversation "back there, at the Cottages" with "[e]veryone always listening in" (p. 152), it becomes clear that the Cottages are merely an extension of the same insidious system of panoptic discipline and physical and symbolic erasure enacted by Hailsham—even more so, since now the only agents of discipline are the clones themselves, who by this point have utterly internalized the fate that has been forced upon them by their society. And yet Kathy conveys these facts to readers with no evident sense of resentment, but rather with her characteristic matter-of-fact tone that renders her initial characterization of the Cottages all the more unsettling. Though the uncanniness of the Cottages seems lost on the clones, it is glaring to readers, to whom Kathy yet again unknowingly reveals her troubling disconnect from the traumatic nature of her very existence.

Only when Kathy reaches the point in her narrative where she has become a carer and Tommy and Ruth have taken up residence at their respective recovery centres does she seem, finally, to register the horror lurking beneath life at the final stop on the string of institutional spaces along which the clones are shunted. Luckhurst observes that in the biomedical-horror genre that has proliferated in the era of New Death (citing Robin Cook's 1977 novel *Coma* as an example), "instead of maidenly virtue threatened in labyrinthine castle dungeons, we have womanly virtue threatened in the antiseptic white spaces of anonymous medical facilities" (2015, pp. 93–94). While Kathy's virtue may not be under threat, her bodily integrity and that of the other clones certainly is, and the physical and metaphorical erasure that the euphemistic recovery centres enact is not lost on Kathy. She describes the disrepair that has befallen Kingsfield, where Tommy resides, noting the "freezing" (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 218) bathrooms and "bunker-like two-storey buildings" (p. 219) that house the uncomfortable and inaccessible rooms, as well as the unkempt grounds that surround the compound "like wasteland" (p. 280). The "blank fog" (p. 280) that presses in from the fence surrounding the centre emphasizes

its invisibility to a society that wishes to keep the inhumane practice of forced organ donation, as well as the impending final physical obliteration of the clones' dispensable bodies, shuttered away.

Throughout the clones' journey from Hailsham to the Cottages and, finally, to the recovery centres, the role of these spaces as homes is continually undercut by the antagonistic and oppressive architectural and geographic properties that imprison the clones both physically and symbolically, shoving them to the literal and metaphorical margins of their society. These qualities enact an irruption of the unfamiliar at the heart of the domestic and ostensibly nurturing qualities that Kathy's narration emphasizes, marking these locations as uncanny spatializations of the clones' abject position within their society. These institutional spaces are nondescript, practically indistinguishable from one another in their absence of historical and cultural signifiers, cloaked instead in the trappings of the Gothic: the uncanny, the threatening, the oppressive, the apocalyptic. The language of the novel's characters similarly cloaks the specific collective trauma of the mandatory organ-donation programme in a generalized rhetoric of exploitation.

This cloaking becomes most apparent in the climactic scene of confrontation near the novel's end between Kathy, Tommy, and the school administrator referred to only as Madame. Where readers may expect a long-awaited contextualization of the cloning and organ-donation programme, Miss Emily offers only non-specific generalizations: how "for a long time, people preferred to believe these organs appeared from nowhere, or at most that they grew in a kind of vacuum" (p. 262), or how the clones "were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you. And if they did, they tried to convince themselves you weren't really like us. That you were less than human, so it didn't matter" (p. 263). The language used to discuss the clones' abject position in society is always general and non-specific, rendering the clones as metaphors for other marginalized groups. The clones are, in society's view, merely representations (or in terms of the Freudian uncanny, doppelgängers) of something else; their symbolic significance is connected to their roles as uncanny doppelgängers of the human population, as well as their abject, and therefore threatening, status. As Ruth states in conversation with Kathy at an earlier point in the novel,

> We all know it. We're modelled from *trash*. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren't psychos. That's what we come from.
>
> … We know it, so we might as well just say it. If you want to look for possibles, if you want to do it properly, then you look in the gutter. You look in the rubbish bins. Look down the toilet, that's where you'll find where we all came from. (p. 166, original emphasis)

But while *Never Let Me Go* expresses specific, real-world anxieties stemming from human cloning and compulsory organ donation (namely the risk of labelling clones as sub-human and thus deserving of exploitation), it does not limit itself to this specific historical context. Instead, the novel locates anxieties surrounding the development of technologies enabling mammalian cloning and the manipulation of the human genome within a larger narrative of twentieth-century traumas (such as the Holocaust) in order to throw into relief its ethical dangers, which might otherwise be obscured by the benefits that such biotechnological developments promise to an elite few.

As a reaction to social and technological change and as a means of articulating humanity's deepest darkest fears, the Gothic is an ideal mode for voicing the inescapable traumas of the past that continue to haunt the present, particularly the violence of the twentieth century, which continues to lie just beneath the surface of what are seen as technological or social "triumphs." The aesthetic of lack in *Never Let Me Go* aligns both with a Gothic concern for that to which the subject has lost access (in this case, both mainstream society and the clones' own past), as well as with trauma fiction's rhetoric of aporia. In addition to the menacing, overpowering landscapes that act as spatial metaphors for the clones' abjection, the novel's use of ruins offers further manifestation of Kathy's disconnect from the traumatic knowledge of her own origins. The significant amount of narrative energy Kathy invests in recreating Hailsham is no substitute for Hailsham itself, which has long been torn down, preventing Kathy from fulfilling her apparent desire to return to a time predating her shadowy awakening to the knowledge of the fate that awaits her (a moment which Kathy is, of course, either unable or unwilling to precisely locate).

So instead of Hailsham itself, a place to which Kathy indicates she would like to return just to prove it had existed, she, Tommy, and Ruth must settle for seeking out the ruins of an old boat, which functions as a stand-in for the school and a link to the past. The encounter prompts

Tommy to wonder, "'Maybe this is what Hailsham looks like now. Do you think?'" (p. 224). He continues, "'I suppose not. Wasn't thinking. But I always see Hailsham being like this now. No logic to it. In fact, this is pretty close to the picture in my head. Except there's no boat, of course. It wouldn't be so bad, if it's like this now'" (p. 224). The derelict boat, mired in a swamp, suggests something primordial which, as in many examples of imagery of ruins presented within Gothic literature as well as within the Romantic tradition more generally, evokes the Burkeian sublime, its preoccupation with the passage of time, and the related concepts of history and memory. The encounter itself is the product of a concern Kathy and her friends retain for these related notions. Their entire adult lives are occupied with the act of "killing time": waiting for the call to relocate to a new living facility, to take on a new job (such as that of carer, in Kathy's case), to donate, and, finally, to "complete" (i.e., reach the body's limit of organ donations and die). In the meantime, they are always tensely circling an aporia at the root of their upbringing and education at Hailsham that remains only partially acknowledged.

In other words, the clones are occupied in deferring a traumatic encounter with the awareness of the gruesome purpose for which they have been created. For the clones, the mysterious ruined boat functions as a link to the past, offering a substitute for the remains of Hailsham, and so appears capable of helping to reconnect the clones with their traumatic origins, thus opening up the possibility of closure, even recovery. But this link to the past, though oddly comforting to the former Hailsham students, is, as Tommy suggests, illogical, never delivering what it promises. The students' journey to the boat, whose very presence in the marshland is unexplained and, as a result, does more to disorient than to anchor the students in their memories of their time at Hailsham, becomes an exercise in futility; ultimately, Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy must continue onward (as they do for much of the novel), wandering the deserted countryside whose lack of distinguishing features reflects their own lack of knowledge of a past from which they remain, whether unwittingly or resolutely, blocked off.

In *Never Let Me Go*, then, Gothic spatial metaphors articulate the students' marginalization at the hands of their society, as well as the damaging psychic impact of such marginalization. The goal here would seem to be in keeping with trauma fiction's overall project of arousing reader sympathy, calling the reader to fulfil an ethical obligation to listen to the testimony the text offers and to share in its inherent trauma, partaking in the

"transmission" of a trauma that exceeds the grasp of any single individual or generation. But though the metaphorical translation of mammalian cloning and its connection to a broader pattern of contemporary institutional violence could be seen as moving towards resolving the crisis of representation that such a collective trauma engenders, *Never Let Me Go*, like the novels discussed in previous chapters, stops short of reflecting the clichéd view of the Gothic as a *fin-de-siècle* phenomenon that merely "tropes" otherwise inarticulable anxieties taking place outside the text. While the Gothic might at first appear to obscure the specificities of the legacy of twentieth-century violence into which Ishiguro's novel slots the human-cloning and organ-donation programme in a way that could be ethically problematic, the novel's harnessing of the Gothic's appetite for the pain of its characters in fact troubles the presumed connection between reader/witness and text upon which literary trauma theory is founded, refusing to entertain the possibility of its readers becoming surrogate victims.

As discussed most explicitly in Chap. 5, relying on a view of the Gothic as a reflection of unspoken anxieties in order to link it to the voicing of otherwise inarticulable trauma ignores the genre's more voyeuristic qualities, first outlined by Edmund Burke in his *Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Recent critics have emphasized these qualities: in his study of Gothic monstrosity, Jack Halberstam, for example, stresses the Gothic's role in producing "deviant subjectivities opposite which the normal, the healthy, and the pure can be known" (1991, p. 2). The voyeuristic thread running through the Gothic, an outgrowth of the psychological distancing that takes place in the act of deferring unspoken anxieties onto abject Others, interferes with the genre's capacity to lend its voice to the testimony of trauma and hence to fulfil the ethical imperative that trauma fiction sets out to achieve. However, this aspect of the Gothic has its own role to play in Kathy's testimony, which rejects trauma theory's presumed empathic connection between testimony/text and witness. Rather, Kathy draws on Gothic conventions of the abject, the monstrous, and the uncanny as a means of self-styling for herself and the other clones, who turn a mirror on the process of Othering performed by their society against them, casting the reader in the role of one who Others. The Gothic's more voyeuristic qualities, then, convey the act of storytelling as both "a constructive response to atrocity and as a potentially dubious method of overcoming traumatic experience" (Levy 2011, p. 1); they also underscore the way in which, as in the sensationalized

depictions of horror found within the Gothic, aestheticized forms of traumatic experience like Kathy's narrative are consumed by audiences not necessarily with empathy per se, but rather "with a mixture of empathy, indifference, and perversion" (p. 1). The notion that the witness who listens to testimony shares in the experience of the victim's trauma is, the novel suggests, a desire sharing more in common with the Burkeian voyeuristic fantasies of the Gothic than Caruth's theory of the unlocalizability of traumatic experience would suggest.

For the clones themselves, the Gothic is more than a one-to-one reflection of collective anxieties; indeed, it is used to produce the psychological distancing effect from true horror described by Spooner. For example, the clones fabricate stories about the supposedly haunted woods that surround Hailsham, seemingly as a means of distracting themselves from, and even rationalizing, their entrapment within the school:

> There were all kinds of horrible stories about the woods. Once, not so long before we all got to Hailsham, a boy had had a big row with his friends and run off beyond the Hailsham boundaries. His body had been found two days later, up in those woods, tied to a tree with the hands and feet chopped off. Another rumour had it that a girl's ghost wandered through those trees. She'd been a Hailsham student until one day she'd climbed over a fence just to see what it was like outside. This was a long time before us, when the guardians were much stricter, cruel even, and when she tried to get back in, she wasn't allowed. She kept hanging around outside the fences, pleading to be let back in, but no one let her. Eventually, she'd gone off somewhere out there, something had happened and she'd died. But her ghost was always wandering about the woods … pining to be let back in. (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 50)

It is unclear whether or not these stories contain a kernel of truth, but the fact that the horrible fates of their protagonists are tied to a desire to escape Hailsham links the telling of the stories to a desire to reinforce a sense of safety and security within its walls. The stories provide a kind of morality lesson for students who may wish to escape their situation (or at least to explore an alternative one), while displacing the horror of the fate that awaits them onto a set of well-worn tropes like forbidden and menacing landscapes, unsolved murders, bodily dismemberment, and hauntings.

The stories do articulate latent anxieties within the students: in a moment of revealing linguistic ambiguity, Kathy states that while the

guardians insist that the stories are "nonsense," older students insist that "that was exactly what the guardians had told *them* when they were younger, and that we'd be told the ghastly truth soon enough, just as they were" (p. 50). The stories, then, articulate the vague sense of distrust in the guardians as caretakers and keepers of knowledge. But the stories do more than merely trope these fears. In addition to providing a distraction from the true horror of the clones' purpose, they also exert a disciplinary influence over students, especially with regard to self-policing. After Marge K. asks one too many questions about the clones' fate, Kathy and her friends "punish" her by "hauling her out of bed, holding her face against the window pane and ordering her to look up at the woods. At first she kept her eyes screwed shut, but we twisted her arms and forced open her eyelids until she saw the distant outline against the moonlit sky, and that was enough to ensure for her a sobbing night of terror" (p. 51). Kathy herself gestures towards the stories' role in distancing students psychologically from the horror lurking beneath their everyday life when she describes their use in what she calls a "fantasy" contrived by students about a plot to abduct one of their instructors, Miss Geraldine (p. 52). This fantasy leads the students to spend considerable time gathering "evidence" against imagined abductors. She states that "[f]or some reason, we were satisfied this would keep any immediate danger at bay" (p. 51), admitting that "the truth was, those of us who'd grown close to her, we each played our part in preserving the fantasy and making it last for as long as possible" (p. 52). Contrary to the anxiety model that informs much Gothic literary criticism, these Gothic narratives distract from the inevitable fate that awaits the clones, acting as a self-preservative means of deferring, and even silencing, the expression of traumatic knowledge, rather than as a means of obliquely articulating it.

This possibility of deferral of traumatic knowledge veers towards the Gothic's elements of desire, and it is by harnessing this aspect of the Gothic that *Never Let Me Go* breaks with the notion of trauma fiction as a purely ethical project designed to spur an empathic identification of reader with text. The clones exhibit (indeed, rely on) a certain desire for the terror that underpins these Gothic stories. Kathy's anecdote encapsulates a hidden project within her narration, which capitalizes on the Gothic's role as a tool to distance oneself psychologically from horror in order to construct a testimony that is far more subversive than it first appears. In emphasizing the fraught relationship between the clones and their normal

human counterparts, Kathy co-opts the abjectification of the clones by the normal human population, reclaiming their abject position as a strategic subjectivity that undermines the "posture of convenient middle distance" that the Gothic, according to Hogle, typically permits (2002, p. 18). In so doing, Kathy ultimately reveals trauma theory's notion of identification with victims and co-ownership of traumatic events to be a kind of fantasy akin to the Gothic desire to witness the suffering contained within the text. Kathy's eschewal of readerly identification with the clones, instead emphasizing the affinity of readers with the society that oppresses them, has an alienating effect on readers that challenges their ownership of the narrative—and, consequently, trauma theory's assumptions of the reader as necessarily empathic witness.

By filling the role of uncanny doppelgängers of the normal human population and also being the characters with whom the reader sympathizes, the clones force readers to share in the experience of their own strangeness, as well as to recognize the coldness of the society that exploits them. In addition to its role within Gothic literature as "harbinger of death" (Spooner 2001, p. 293) and manifestation of that which, in Freudian terms, is ejected from the ego as "something alien" (Freud 1995, p. 143), the uncanny resemblance that marks the doppelgänger as akin to its original (what binds the clones to their possibles) aligns the Gothic double with the Kristeva abject as a loss of distinction between subject and object: that which "from its place of banishment … does not cease challenging its master" (1982, p. 2). It is from this position of uncanniness and abjection that Kathy writes.

The image of the clone as uncanny doppelgänger appears in a 2014 study by Linda Carol Ogsten, who connects the figure of the clone in contemporary British literature with the trope of the Gothic double, which, she argues, offers a sympathetic portrayal of the clone as both victim and monster:

> A central feature of the Gothic, the nineteenth-century double dramatises the conflict between original and double as the split within one individual, a split which is only temporary and leads inevitably to death. Through death, order is restored and along with it, the humanist ideal of a fixed, Cartesian self. Cloning complicates this by duplicating the whole person, frequently resulting in the loss of the original altogether. (p. 127)

Michele Braun echoes Ogsten's assertion, arguing that "in their replication of their possibles, the original people on whom the clones are modeled, the clones embody a fear that the replicated human might be indistinguishable from the original" (2010, p. 71). Ogsten traces the increasing sympathy with which clones are portrayed in literature pre- and post-Dolly (including *Never Let Me Go*), arguing that "while the traditional double is viewed as evil and a threat to the self, in contemporary cloning narratives the horror has been transferred away from the double which represents the product of evil rather than evil itself," and that "[t]he clone has become a tragic, even heroic, figure" (2014, p. 127). Sara Wasson also views the clones as Gothic doubles, emphasizing their social role in embodying "a scathing critique of a conceptual binary at the heart of contemporary organ transplant practice" (2014, p. 73). However, contrary to Ogsten's suggestion that the position of Gothic Other the clones occupy "align[s] the clone and reader" (2014, p. 212), and to Wasson's that this doubling forces readers to oscillate "between revulsion and sympathy" (2014, p. 83), Kathy's self-conscious reclamation of the subject position of uncanny Other in fact rejects reader sympathy altogether.[4]

Many of Kathy's descriptions of herself and of the other students enact a process of Gothic self-fashioning, owning the clones' position as uncanny doubles of the human population. Kathy often characterizes her fellow clones as uncanny Others; for example, she describes the clones living at Kingsfield, Tommy's recovery centre, as "shadowy figures" loitering under the roof of a deserted outbuilding: figures devoid of distinguishing

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[4] The clones also lend themselves to analysis by way of Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto," originally a rejection of feminist essentialism that has since been applied to various other contexts, which calls for coalitions of "affinity, not identity" (1991, p. 155), and features the cyborg—the "illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism" (p. 151)—as its central metaphor. The clone and the cyborg may be aligned with the Gothic in equally productive ways; Michele Braun, in fact, does just that, arguing that "although the mechanical nature of the cyborg body on the surface appears to differ significantly from the biologically-manipulated body of the clone … the relationship between body, soul and identity is complicated by the human intervention into the production and reproduction of the human in these two kinds of figures" (2010, p. 64). By virtue of their shared function "to re-imagine the experience of the outsider" (2010, p. 3), the cyborg is as much a Gothic subject as the clone, and that the clone could even be viewed as a subset of the cyborg (though this association is beyond the scope of this book). For a study of the cyborg as Gothic double and its function in post-humanist re-readings of various eighteenth-century Gothic texts, see Dongshin Yi's *A Genealogy of Cyborgothic: Aesthetics and Ethics in the Age of Posthumanism*.

characteristics that would humanize them to their society (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 219). In a visit to Ruth's recovery centre in Dover, Kathy describes the uncanny doubling that occurs when she catches her own reflection in the centre's gleaming tiles: "of course, you don't exactly see yourself reflected back loads of times, but you almost think you do. When you lift an arm, or when someone sits up in bed, you can feel this pale, shadowy movement all around you in the tiles" (p. 17). From these descriptions it seems that the clones appear uncanny even to themselves, indicating the degree to which they have internalized their own Otherness. Although perhaps surprising, these descriptions are apt given how the clones play self-consciously with this identity position.

By harnessing this Otherness and turning it back onto the original human population, Kathy subverts the identification that trauma fiction seeks to establish between the reader/witness and the traumatized protagonist. In essence, Kathy and her classmates embody the figure of the Gothic child, who, according to Margarita Georgieva (2013), "often become the guiltless victims of fate or of villainy." Within the Gothic tradition, "[i]f children cannot struggle with fate, they can resist tyranny, and authors readily experiment with the idea of children surviving and fighting trauma" (p. 170). This is certainly the case for Ishiguro's characterization of the clones, who are intensely aware of the way their society views them; Kathy notes, for instance, how Madame is "scared of us" (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 33), and she and her cohort take advantage of this fear to enact a form of resistance against the institutional violence that Madame symbolizes. On one of Madame's visits, the students self-consciously perform their uncanniness by

Saunter[ing] out, moving straight for her, but like we were all in a dream. Only when she came to a stiff halt did we each murmur: "Excuse me, Miss," and separate.… I can still see it now, the shudder she seemed to be suppressing, the real dread that one of us would accidentally brush against her. And though we just kept on walking, we all felt it; it was like we'd walked from the sun right into a chilly shade. Ruth had been right: Madame *was* afraid of us. (p. 35)

While the clones are aware of the aversion of the original human population to them, Kathy never explains why this should be so, though Luckhurst's aforementioned study into the proliferation of biomedical horror in the age of New Death offers some insight. In this study,

Luckhurst argues that the normalization of organ transplantation, the compartmentalization of body systems due to development of technologies like the iron lung, and the general medicalization of death has led to "a whole new order of liminal ontologies, the new undead" (2015, p. 84).

These liminal ontologies are both biological and political. Drawing on Agamben's studies of the Holocaust, Luckhurst cites the example of the *Muselmann*: the figure previously evoked in Chap. 2, who "lives on, barely, but who is already marked out for an inevitable, anonymous death and so exists in an unbearable liminal state" (Luckhurst 2015, p. 86). One may note the similarity between this state of being and the "social death" of Ishiguro's clones that Braun identifies (2010, p. 89). Alive, though marked for death, the clones represent a rupture of ontological boundaries and an ethical crisis for the administrators of Hailsham: they are the liminal "walking dead" of the age of New Death, identical to their originals and yet irresolvably Other, rendering them deeply uncanny to their original human counterparts. The clones' ability to manipulate Madame's aversion to them indicates their self-awareness and their agency in adopting the subject position of liminal, abject Other. Interestingly, Kathy is surprised at the sense of rejection that manipulating Madame's instinctual fear of the clones generates, noting, "She was afraid of us in the same way someone might be afraid of spiders.… It had never occurred to us to wonder how *we* would feel, being seen like that, being the spiders" (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 35). For readers, empathic identification with the clones would require acknowledging the failed responsibility of the original humans who purport to take responsibility for them: the obvious denial of this responsibility subverts expectations, placing the original human population in the position of uncanny Other.

This is not the only occasion upon which Kathy suggests that it is in fact the original human population who are the uncanny doubles within the original/clone dichotomy. She draws on the idea, for example, in relation to the originals from whom the clones have been copied. Claiming that the knowledge of their existence is a fact that "had both intrigued and disturbed us," producing a complex mixture of fear and desire that leads the clones, when in public, to "ke[ep] an eye out for 'possibles'—the people who might have been the models for you and your friends," Kathy casts the original human population in the role of intriguing, yet fearful curiosities (p. 139). This perspective resists the label of Other that keeps the clones in their abject position and turns it back onto the society that oppresses them.

The climactic scene of Kathy and Tommy's encounter with Madame and Miss Emily is Kathy's reversal of the Gothic gaze at its most unsettling, with the reunion between the characters once again stirring up in Kathy feelings of rejection:

> [A]s her gaze fell on us, a chill passed through me, much like the one I'd felt years ago that time we'd waylaid her outside the main house. Her eyes were as cold, and her face maybe even more severe than I remembered. I don't know if she recognised us at that point; but without doubt, she saw and decided in a second *what we were*, because you could see her stiffen—as if a pair of large spiders was set to crawl towards her. (p. 248)

Kathy's characterization of Madame and Miss Emily (and indeed the entire Hailsham faculty, which appears to be exclusively female), casts them as harmful and destructive would-be mothers: a feature that borrows directly from the Gothic tradition. As Georgieva writes, the Gothic presents "conflicting views of harmful, destructive motherhood. Unnatural mothers are abandoning and infanticidal 'relinquishers' but also overly protective and intruding 'keepers' of children" (2013, p. 181). The Hailsham instructors are responsible for all aspects of the care and protection of the clones through their formative years (and indeed become friends and even surrogate mother figures for many of their students), but only for the purposes of shuttling the clones along the path to their eventual demise. This encounter between Kathy, Tommy, and their former caregivers constitutes a failed opportunity for Madame and Miss Emily to acknowledge responsibility for the clones that their society has created and entrusted to their care by allowing for even a brief deferral of donations/completion as Kathy and Tommy so desperately desire (akin to the response Frankenstein's monster desires from his creator). Instead, Madame's gaze, void of recognition but, rather, filled with disgust, perverts what might otherwise constitute a maternal connection, rendering Madame, and the population of original humans that she represents, as uncanny to the clones, just as the clones are to Madame. The scene itself takes place in a mansion furnished with, among other Gothic trappings, a "picture, woven like a tapestry, of a strange owl-like bird staring out at you" and a table lamp whose "crooked shade covered with cobweb traces" obscures Miss Emily's dramatic entrance from behind the shadowy recesses of a secret moving book-case (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 250). Kathy's emphasis on the climactic scene's more chilling qualities reinforces the uncanny,

threatening presence of the original humans whose once nurturing relationship with the clones now, at the moment of Madame's and Miss Emily's denial of Kathy and Tommy's request, reveals itself to have been corrupt at its core. As her characterization of Madame and Miss Emily here suggests, for Kathy, the two are nothing short of monstrous.

The monster, of course, has a prominent role to play in Gothic cultural productions from the eighteenth century to the contemporary, and *Never Let Me Go* capitalizes on its shifting significations. Jack Halberstam (1991) writes that monsters are "meaning machines" capable of serving both normative and subversive functions: historically, the monster is "the Other against whom the normal … can be known and quantified" (p. 89). In a contemporary context, "the emergence of the monster within Gothic fiction marks a peculiarly modern emphasis upon the horror of particular kinds of bodies," taking on potentially more subversive properties (p. 3). This is certainly true of the clones in *Never Let Me Go*; the aversion they provoke in their original human guardians highlights the degree to which their uncanny similarity to the "possibles" after whom they are modelled, coupled with the purpose they serve as growth factories for spare parts, confronts the original population with their own cruelty. The self-reflexivity of the clones'—and particularly Kathy's—process of self-fashioning as uncanny and abject Others adds an element of cultural resistance to the threat the clones pose to the original human population, returning the gaze that keeps the clones locked in positions of objects of, at worst, fear, and, at best, pity, though never the recipients of any meaningful acts of empathy that such a position might engender from witnesses.

Madame and Miss Emily, the two characters with the potential power to actualize Kathy and Tommy's wish to be spared from their terrible fate, embody the novel's challenge to the idea of the responsive reader. Throughout *Never Let Me Go*, the Hailsham staff maintain a position of empathy, but only insofar as their society allows them to do so. Much of Madame and Miss Emily's encounter with Kathy and Tommy is spent making a case for their treatment of the clones at Hailsham, which they claim was more ethical than at most institutions, though many of these claims fall flat. An example of the failure of Hailsham to live up to its ethical claims is its art programme, whose purpose, while a mystery to students, is eventually revealed to have been to demonstrate "'that if students were reared in humane, cultivated environments, it was possible for them to grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any normal human

being'" (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 261). However, it becomes apparent from Kathy and Tommy's conversation with Madame and Miss Emily that the art programme does not serve the victims of trauma, but rather those who consume their art. Those who might be led, by viewing the students' creative output, to feelings of empathy—Miss Emily claims that the students' art allowed the original human population to view them as more than simply "shadowy objects in test tubes" (p. 261)—fall short of converting their empathy into action, since to do so would mean foregoing the benefits that exploitation of the clones would provide them. Miss Emily's final gesture towards Kathy and Tommy as they leave the mansion illustrates this point: "'You poor creatures,' she repeated, almost in a whisper. Then she turned and went back into her house" (p. 272). The act symbolizes the net effect of the art programme at Hailsham, which, while supposedly moving audiences to acknowledge the plight of the clones, stops short of provoking an empathic response of any material consequence (such as the kind of exemption that Kathy and Tommy are seeking). That the audience that consumes this artwork is made up of those implicated in society's worst abuses towards them constitutes a spectatorial failure. The social experiment of Hailsham consequently reveals itself as being at least partially motivated by a desire to assuage the guilt of those who are ultimately complicit in the clones' suffering. Closing the door, literally and figuratively, on Kathy and Tommy's request, Madame and Miss Emily make clear that their ethically troubling position, as well as that of those who consume the clones' artwork, is one that readers of Kathy's testimony are at equal risk of occupying.

Kathy's Gothic self-fashioning is key to challenging presumptions of reader empathy in narratives of trauma. Though Wasson cautions against viewing the Gothic as "having a straightforwardly progressive political agenda," she does point to the way in which "the uncanny can be a political tool, in that it destabilizes the certainties that underpin structural oppressions" (2014, p. 82), and she argues that texts like *Never Let Me Go* "give a platform for imagining resistance, for the fact that the clone is a double emphasizes the kinship between harvester and harvested, and thus demonstrates visibly that the harvester is implicated in the tissue economy" (p. 83). For Wasson, the political power of the Gothic doubling in these texts lies in its ability to move "between revulsion and sympathy" with the harvestees, producing "a discomfiting, convulsive response challenging the reader to face the ethics of the processes depicted" (p. 83). What Wasson does not address, however, is Kathy's self-conscious and strategic

occupation of her uncanny subject position, which critiques any self-congratulatory impulse in readers who may be too comfortable inhabiting this oscillatory position (i.e., who, despite acknowledging the suffering of the clones, may nonetheless be too quick to shut the door on Kathy and Tommy in the way of Madame and Miss Emily).

Kathy shows that the act of readerly listening as the "you" whom she addresses from the outset of her narrative is inherently voyeuristic, and the act of responding to what is said transgressive. Readers gradually become ever more aware that Kathy groups them not with potential allies of her fellow clones, but rather with the society that antagonizes them. Kathy excludes readers from full identification with the clones' plight by tacitly including them in the population from which she deliberately distances herself and her fellow students, thereby denying trauma fiction's presumed empathic connection between reader-witness and text-victim. As the chasm that separates the clones' experience as social pariahs from that of the human population widens, readers are made to feel less and less "at home" in the narrative as they realize that they are intruding on a testimony not meant for them. In this way, the novel troubles the idea of the reader as being inherently "responsive" and "vulnerable" (Hartman 1995, p. 549), instead presenting the act of reading Kathy's testimony as a failure to witness. Kathy's testimony is not for "you" as readers may initially understand it.

As Madame and Miss Emily's blithe belief in their own morality demonstrates, Ishiguro's novel is sceptical of a presumed empathic connection between victim and witness. Indeed, the novel's critique of this assumption extends even to Kathy herself, who, once she becomes a carer, begins to lose credibility as an ally of the fellow clones for whom her narrative purports to speak—a fact that reveals itself most prominently in her relationship with Ruth and Tommy, upon which Kathy's role as carer places considerable strain once the two are marked to begin their donation process. Ruth is outspoken in her disdain for Kathy's protected new position and the resulting gap in personal experience that develops between the two: when Kathy remarks on the ability of certain clones to come to terms with their impending donations more readily than others, for example, Ruth exclaims, "'How would you know? … How could you possibly know? You're still a carer'" (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 226). While Tommy is initially more sensitive than Ruth towards the emotional toll that being a carer takes on Kathy, he, too, on more than one occasion, acknowledges the difficulty he and Kathy have in relating to one another (a fact Kathy

herself either fails or refuses to acknowledge), remarking that "If you were a donor, you'd see" (p. 278). Despite her best efforts to convince Tommy that she is prepared to remain with him as he faces his fourth (and probably final) donation, Tommy remains unconvinced, believing that Kathy does not truly comprehend his experience and claiming that "Ruth would have understood. She was a donor, so she would have understood" (p. 281). By reversing the gaze that sees the clones Othered by their society as uncanny doubles, Kathy's narrative emphasizes the impediments to empathic identification that exist within her society between victim and witness, forcing readers to instead inhabit the uncomfortable position of passive, even voyeuristic, spectator: a position shared in common with the audiences Burke envisions for the "uncommon and grievous calamities" of the Gothic novel (p. 12).

By offering an alternate reality marked by a Gothic aesthetic—an aesthetic that, according to William Patrick Day, "arises out of the immediate needs of the reading public to … articulate and define their psychic experience" (1985, p. 179)—*Never Let Me Go* invites readers to consider how the rapid (and, for many, troubling) advancements made in cloning and in genetic manipulation in general at the "*fin de millennium*" (Spooner 2006, p. 21) evade rational capture, the incomprehensibility lying at the heart of human rights abuses, and the aporetic nature of traumatic memory itself. However, by questioning the assumption that audiences, through the act of reading, come to share ownership of the novel's traumatic subject matter, the novel deviates from Caruth's formulation of trauma as an event that fundamentally defies comprehension, a phenomenon that "exceed[s] the grasp of one who survives it" (1996, p. 66) and whose testimony forms "not an understanding, but a transmission" (p. 106). Rather than offer its traumatic subject matter as that which cannot be known as fact but which can be transmitted to (and thus shared by) the reader/listener, an act that risks the problematic erasure of distinctions between victim and witness, this novel instead puts forth an alternative outcome in which the communication of traumatic experience leads to the possibility of resilience through narrative even as the experience of trauma is shared between victims. Writing about Ishiguro's novel as human rights narrative, Levy critiques the potential for trauma fiction to fetishize the suffering of another, even unintentionally, writing that "[t]rauma narratives may have good intentions, but they also reflect and reinforce an exploitative relationship that places the suffering body prostrate in front of the voyeuristic gaze of a distant witness"; however, he applauds *Never Let*

Me Go for "address[ing] this paradox by omitting the gory details" (2011, p. 14). In place of the one-sided relationship between analyst and analysand in the Freudian psychoanalytic model upon which much trauma theory is based, *Never Let Me Go* offers an alternative, with Kathy's role as carer allowing for the sharing of her own story with other clones, functioning as a kind of alternative form of healing beyond Freud that privileges mutual exchange over one-sided analysis.

Kathy's interdependent relationship with her donors highlights this process of mutual exchange. Initially, her position as a carer isolates her from other clones, causing her to suffer from the secondary trauma related to bearing witness to the trauma of others and having no one of her own to relate it to. She describes feelings of exhaustion as well as "solitude. You grow up surrounded by crowds of people, that's all you've ever known, and suddenly you're a carer. You spend hour after hour, on your own, driving across the country, centre to centre, hospital to hospital, sleeping in overnights, no one to talk to about your worries, no one to have a laugh with" (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 207). Much of Kathy's description of her role resembles the discourse of social work, nursing, or humanitarian work: professions notorious for leading to burnout related to witnessing trauma and isolation due to being bound by confidentiality, or simply the sense that no one could possibly understand. These personal insights are rare but telling: they reveal that Kathy's narrative serves a healing purpose for her as much as for donors.

The mutual exchange that occurs between Kathy and her donors offers an alternative to the Freudian psychoanalytical model that envisions a one-sided relationship between analyst and analysand. Rather, the novel, when viewed as a conversation between Kathy and the unnamed "you" that, it becomes clear, is one of her donors, comes closer to more recent models of the communication of trauma advanced by critics like A. R. Denham. Denham's work, which engages with anthropological studies of the Coeur d'Alene tribe, points out that "[u]nfortunately, the literature rarely discusses alternative characteristics or manifestations of historical trauma" beyond the kind of pathological responses outlined by Caruth and others (Denham 2008, p. 393). His work stresses the importance of recognizing the "pattern of diverse responses that may result from exposure to historical trauma" (p. 391), which differ among different individuals and societies and which "do not always result in psychiatric distress" (p. 395). Members of the Coeur d'Alene, Denham observes, "frame their traumatic past into an ethic that functions in the transmission of resilience strategies, family

identity, and as a framework for narrative emplotment" (p. 391). For one family in particular, their "history of trauma and their related narratives appeared to function as a vector, a significant carrier of cultural and family identity. Additionally, embedded within the trauma narratives were numerous strategies for resilience, or a non-pathological adaptive response and ability to maintain or 'spring back' to a stable equilibrium after experiencing adversity" (p. 392). Coming together as a community (often through narrative strategies like song and dance) creates an "ethic of sharing narratives" that "generates and connects a cycle of listening and learning that culminates in sharing their wisdom with others" (p. 393). The act is a transmission, though of an arguably different kind than Caruth envisions.

Similar to the practices Denham identifies, embedded within Kathy's narrative are strategies for resilience and non-pathological adaptive responses. While Kathy recognizes the trauma her donors have been through, their shared background allows her to gauge her donors' needs without assuming they speak from a position of pathological victimhood, and to respond with discretion. She writes that "it means a lot to me, being able to do my work well, especially that bit about my donors staying 'calm'. I've developed a kind of instinct around donors. I know when to hang around and comfort them, when to leave them to themselves; when to listen to everything they have to say, and when just to shrug and tell them to snap out of it" (Ishiguro 2005b, p. 3). At the same time, sharing her own story with donors, while serving as a distraction from their own pain, also serves a therapeutic purpose for Kathy that is rooted in interdependence and mutual exchange. She stresses, for example, that over the course of the repeated Hailsham stories she is asked to share with one donor, "the line would blur between what were my memories and what were his. That was when I first understood, really understood, just how lucky we'd been—Tommy, Ruth, me, all the rest of us" (p. 6). Given the frequency with which Kathy employs the second-person narrative voice, continually prompting the unknown listener to offer his/her own memories, Kathy's memories are presumably being exchanged for (and, in certain cases, corroborated by) those of her donors, though as Kathy makes evident by excluding readers through various Gothic strategies, this exchange is not intended for the reader's voyeuristic gaze.

This sort of interdependence and exchange underpins the students' relationships from their earliest days at Hailsham. Speaking of the school's art programme, which involves seasonal art exchanges, Kathy describes

the "subtle effect" these exchanges had "on us all. If you think about it, being dependent on each other to produce the stuff that might become your private treasures—that's bound to do things to your relationships" (p. 16). In spite of the programme's failure to arouse meaningful responses of empathy in the original human population, students are nonetheless able to reap some therapeutic benefit by building connections with one another through the act of sharing their art, which becomes analogous to the sharing of testimony among those with a common traumatic past; crucially, however, this process of exchange is exclusive to those with that shared past. A similar ethos of interdependence is apparent in Kathy's description of how the students listen to music: "the craze was for several people to sit on the grass around a single Walkman, passing the headset around. Okay, it sounds a stupid way to listen to music, but it created a really good feeling. You listened for maybe twenty seconds, took off the headset, passed it on. After a while, provided you kept the same tape going over and over, it was surprising how close it was to having heard it all by yourself" (p. 103). This scene also connects figuratively to the process of testimony among those with a shared past and suggests a strategy of resilience beyond pathology. As the act of exchanging art transforms the highly personal nature of testimony into an act of relationship-forging interdependence, passing around a pair of headphones transforms the act of listening from a highly personal and individual experience to one that is shared. The negative reaction of the guardians, who "weren't too keen, saying we'd spread ear infections" (p. 103), illustrates once again the exclusive nature of this act of sharing, with the interdependence that the act engenders applying only to the clones whose identity is shaped by the underlying horror of their everyday existence. The act is one that readers are invited to witness, but in which they are not invited to share. By excluding readers from complete empathic identification with the clones, Kathy's narrative acknowledges the dangers such identification poses in blurring ethical boundaries and erasing culpability—a risk that is especially relevant given the complicity of the original human population in the clones' suffering.

Rather than merely settle for Caruth's model of traumatic transmission, the incorporation of the clones' traumatic past into their identity—a process that promotes interchange over one-sided analysis—leads to greater resilience not just for the clone who is momentarily distracted from his own pain by Kathy's stories, but also for Kathy herself, who by the end of the novel has found solace in the memories of Ruth and Tommy

to which she clings for comfort and which the act of sharing her narrative allows her to consolidate. "The memories I value most," Kathy writes, "I don't see them ever fading. I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won't lose my memories of them" (p. 286). What makes Ishiguro's novel particularly sensitive to its traumatic subject matter is that, unlike what Caruth's model of trauma suggests, this is not a process in which the reader is invited to share. Kathy's exclusion of readers from total empathic identification with the clones confers a greater degree of ownership over the narrative on the victims themselves: victims for whom trauma fiction claims to speak but whose voices it may risk erasing unwittingly. Kathy's Gothic narration generates empathy for the clones who navigate the novel's empty, ruinous, and post-apocalyptic world and works as a means of self-fashioning for the clones: a way to assert their identity, emphasizing the culpability of readers who, as becomes evident, have more in common with the society that exploits the clones than with the clones themselves.

This exposure of readers' culpability problematizes trauma fiction's drive to ethical purity, suggesting that the idea of the purely empathic reader-witness is a kind of desire more in line with the Burkeian notion of Gothic voyeurism than with trauma fiction's ethical project. Put differently, the novel's Gothic aesthetic acts as the vector for the alienation of the reader, whose act of reading becomes analogous to the spectatorial failure of the Hailsham instructors who, while presuming themselves to be empathetic, ultimately, and quite literally, close the door on the clones' suffering. This is a productive troubling, as it reclaims the victim's voice against those who might, even unwittingly, be complicit in their suffering. Not only does *Never Let Me Go* highlight the risk inherent in trauma fiction of succumbing to voyeuristic urges or self-congratulatory desires but it also presents an alternative mode of representation of trauma that, through Kathy's strategic use of Gothic convention, holds the reader at a distance. In so doing, Ishiguro's novel strikes a delicate balance, managing at once to convey the process of working-through while avoiding the ethical pitfalls that might grant readers the pleasurable discomfort of vicarious victimhood or that might place the last word on traumatic experience in the hands of anyone but victims themselves. As the final novel in this study, *Never Let Me Go* provides the most forward-thinking example of the more critically self-aware texts from which literary trauma theory stands to benefit.

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Conclusion

This book began by acknowledging how the notion of trauma, as "the historical experience of a survival exceeding the grasp of one who survives" (Caruth 1996, p. 66), quite aptly exceeds the grasp of any one theoretical framework. If we accept Luckhurst's notion of trauma as having a status "somewhere between the natural and the man-made" (2010, p. 15), then approaches to understanding both its psychological mechanisms and its ever-increasing prominence within contemporary society demand an interdisciplinary approach. It is not entirely surprising, then, that trauma theory has grown from a relatively small group of critics writing out of Yale University whose work relied heavily on Freudian psychology to a field that encompasses a diverse range of approaches, from psychoanalysis, neurobiology, and sociology to genetics, history, and beyond. Correspondingly, that trauma fiction owes so much to other modes of writing to articulate the experience of trauma also comes as no surprise. Anne Whitehead cites postmodernism and postcolonialism as major influences, for example, arguing that trauma fiction shares with postmodernism "its tendency to bring conventional narrative techniques to their limit" and "overlaps with postcolonial fiction in its concern with the recovery of memory and the acknowledgement of the denied, the repressed, and the forgotten" (2004, p. 82).

The interdisciplinarity that marks current approaches to understanding trauma and its forms of representation are likely responsible for the recent critical interest in trauma fiction's appropriation of these other genres and

the narrative possibilities they offer beyond the aporetic paradigm governing traumatic realism. Exploiting the conventions of genre fiction can open up new modes of expression beyond dwelling on inexpressibility. The Gothic, of course, is of considerable interest given its proliferation across a myriad of cultural productions as well as the genre's ties to trauma theory, identified by critics like Steven Bruhm, who suggests that "the contemporary Gothic subject is the psychoanalytic subject (and *vice versa*)" (2002, p. 262). In light of Luckhurst's reference to the "torturous times" (2010, p. 11) in which we live, where images of atrocities—whether taking place within or beyond our borders—demand dissemination for the purposes of political and legal action, the task of moving beyond unrepresentability in trauma fiction takes on a new urgency. This belief is supported by Maria Beville's theory of Gothic-postmodernism as a "hybrid genre" whose "concern with the unrepresentable" may, paradoxically, provide "the clearest mode of expression in literature for voicing the terrors of postmodernity, a mode that is far from dead and in fact rejuvenated in the present context of increased global terrorism" (2009, p. 8).

Though Luckhurst disparages the "initially pleasing paradoxical formulae" (2010, p. 12) that preside over trauma fiction's dominant aesthetic, both his and Beville's work falls victim to another pleasing paradoxical formula that has seemingly come to dominate Gothic criticism: one that sees the Gothic as primarily a mode with which to think the unthinkable or to say the unsayable. While Luckhurst frames the idea of using the Gothic's oversignifications as a means of forcing traumatic experience into expression as a new development, this view in some ways extrapolates an already longstanding fixation within Gothic criticism on the central trope of unspeakability. The critical reliance on the notion of the Gothic as a literary outlet through which latent anxieties may be obliquely articulated through its recognizable system of ghostly, monstrous, abject, and hybrid forms is one that this book has attempted to probe. This view of the Gothic is analogous to the notion advanced by trauma theorists like Geoffrey Hartman of traumatic memory as "a perpetual troping" (1995, p. 538) of a primary experience which cannot be captured and, as such, can easily explain the often intimate connection made between the Gothic and trauma fiction. But like trauma fiction's preoccupation with the unlocalizability of traumatic memory, this view of the Gothic, in the words of Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, is doomed "to reproduce what it fails to understand" (2001, p. 279). This book has sought to answer the following questions: is there more work to be done in exploring the connec-

tion between these two modes of writing, especially in light of the renewed interest in traumatic experience and in the Gothic that has emerged at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first? While we may reasonably identify a link between traditional forms of the Gothic and latent social anxieties, does this link change within the highly metafictional context of contemporary trauma fiction? The answer to both of these questions is a resounding Yes.

Contemporary culture's dual interest in experiences of trauma (both personal and collective) and in the Gothic is a millennial phenomenon, reflecting the emergence in the late twentieth century of what Kirby Farrell has termed "post-traumatic culture" (1998, p. 18): a contention that is supported by the focus in the novels discussed here on a specifically apocalyptic malaise characterizing the closing decade of the twentieth century. This is especially true of *London Fields* and *Atonement*, both of which, despite their publication on either side of the new millennium, locate their main action in 1999. Both authors characterize the final year of the twentieth century as cataclysmic, whether in its ushering in of the Crisis or in its signalling of the loss of first-hand memory of twentieth-century historical traumas. Similarly, by locating its plot in a speculative 1990s, Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* produces a sense of the decade as the culmination of a broad pattern of twentieth-century exploitation of the marginalized, a theme rendered all the more striking by the novel's overall lack of historical context. *The Gates of Ivory* and *Double Vision* both present an apocalyptic millennial vision, Drabble's novel in its juxtaposition of Fukuyama's End of History with Pol Pot's Year Zero policies and Barker's novel in its portrayal of Stephen Sharkey as wounded millennial man still suffering from the shock of the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century traumas he has witnessed as a war reporter. In these novels, the specific traumas the characters face (nuclear annihilation, genocide, world war, terrorism and ethnic conflict, and human exploitation), as well as the crises of representation they produce (whether through absentee authors, fragmented found narratives, unreliable memories, minds in the grips of PTSD, or denial in the guise of nostalgia) are framed as unmistakably Gothic, *fin-de-siècle* (or, to use Catherine Spooner's term, "*fin de millennium*" [2006, p. 21]) phenomena. Contemporary British trauma fiction's Gothic aesthetic and apocalyptic mood, it seems, arise out of a sense of helplessness that stems from the contemporary Western subject's highly mediated experience of collective violence.

In *London Fields*, *The Gates of Ivory*, and *Double Vision*, this mediation is due primarily to the proliferation of mass media that brings the experience of distant trauma into the realm of everyday experience in new and disorienting ways. In the case of *London Fields*, the highly discursive quality characterizing the individual's experience of the threat of nuclear war leads to a pervasive atmosphere of heightened tension—an uncanniness that Samson Young feels deeply. In *The Gates of Ivory*, images of far-away human suffering propagated by newspaper stories, strategically captioned photographs, and nightly news reports render collective trauma personal for Liz Headleand despite her resistance to becoming implicated in these "atrocity stories." In *Double Vision*, collective trauma is again made personal, this time by Stephen's inability to keep the horrors he has witnessed as a journalist from creeping into his private life, resulting in the symptoms of PTSD that trouble his relationship with Justine. In *Atonement*, *Regeneration*, and *Never Let Me Go*, the belated experience of trauma has more to do with the mechanisms of traumatic memory (such as the transition Anastasiadis identifies from communicative to cultural memory) that bridge gaps of time than with forms of media that purport to connect through space, although in this case it is the relationship between memory and writing as forms of mediation of trauma that these novels problematize. In *Atonement*, Briony, in spite of her intention to set the matter of Robbie's innocence straight, cannot escape her drive to embellish her narrative with the trappings of the Gothic conventions that ignite her imagination; in *Regeneration*, memories of war both haunt and inspire the characters of Wilfred Owen and Sigfried Sassoon in troubling ways; while in *Never Let Me Go*, Kathy ruminates on the reliability of her childhood memories in a way that is symptomatic of a strategic forgetting of trauma, struggling to construct a narrative that is at once faithful to the events of her past, yet also able to provide a certain escapism for the clones who look to her stories as a means of forgetting their own pain.

In each novel, the position of relative safety from which the witness speaks (whether resulting from spatial or from temporal distance from the initial trauma) belies the ways in which the act of witnessing, even at a remove, is a deeply anxiety-ridden experience. This anxiety does not simply derive from the "transmission" of trauma from victim to witness (Caruth 1996, p. 106) but, beyond this transmission, stems from the cognitive dissonance arising from the inherent voyeurism embedded in the act of reading other people's pain—voyeurism that is at odds with trauma fiction's imperative to reproduce in its readers something of the experience of trauma. The act of reading (and, thus, of bearing witness to) trauma becomes an ethically fraught act. As a result, writing about traumatic

experience as though it were one's own seems an inadequate, and even, at times, arrogant response. What makes the particular texts discussed here so intriguing is the way each of these novels shows awareness of these ethical complications, and this self-awareness corresponds to the way in which the Gothic genre in which they participate is, especially in its contemporary mode, inherently self-aware in its use of familiar, conventional tropes. The Gothic's inherent metafictional awareness is precisely what allows the ethical issues imbedded in the act of reading, writing, and theorizing trauma fiction to emerge. Put differently, the Gothic speaks to the dissonant pleasures of regarding from a comfortable distance the pain of another as much as to the terror and unspeakability aroused by specific trauma.

These six novels, through their participation in the Gothic, exhibit an increasing degree of complication of the ethical imperatives of trauma theory. In *London Fields*, the Gothic is primarily employed as a means of at once reproducing and moving beyond the "lacuna at the heart of witnessing" (Agamben 2002, p. 123). The motif of the nuclear sublime conveys the vastness of the threat of nuclear warfare as "an event eliminating its own witness" (Felman and Laub 1992, p. xvii) and reproduces the challenge to representation that the "unthinkability" of this trauma engenders, while the "black hole[s]" (Amis 1989, p. 67) of Samson's traumatized narration offer up Gothic spatializations of his shattered psyche. However, the novel's absurdist vein, embodied most significantly in Marmaduke as the monstrous symbol of the nuclear bomb, mounts a challenge to the notion that trauma fiction must bear witness, first and foremost, to the paradoxical impossibility of witnessing. Caruth's theory of the work of trauma fiction as an inherently ethical mode of testimony is, for the most part, unproblematized until Samson's final word to Kim introduces the kernel of doubt into the ethics of writing trauma that is explored in more depth in the later novels.

In *The Gates of Ivory*, the Gothic reproduces the belatedness of trauma's "present and absent realities" (Favret 2010, p. 29) through the found narrative; it also provides the set of metaphors through which to understand the anxiety of witnesses' responsibility towards victims of distant trauma by rendering Pol Pot's Cambodia as a numinous world through which Liz must pass from her comfortable everyday existence in order to locate the missing Stephen. However, the Gothic also troubles the idea that bridging the boundary between victim and witness is as simple as listening

to survivor testimony, as Liz's encounter with Mme Savet Akrun makes clear. Modes of representation purported to join viewer and viewed in empathic connection are in fact shown to maintain their separation from one another and reinforce the position of security from which viewers can both condemn and voyeuristically consume images of trauma. Here the double-edged role of the Gothic takes on more prominence, with the novel both expressing the "negative sublime" (LaCapra 1998, p. 2; Berleant 2009) that the staggering scale of the Cambodian genocide arouses and simultaneously registering, through the "numinous terror" of the threshold—a trope that Aguirre writes "is vital to the construction of Gothic fiction" (2008, p. 1)—the spectatorial challenges to the witness charged with the difficult task of responding to atrocities viewed from afar.

Atonement (coincidentally the first of the six novels published after Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* laid the foundations for literary trauma theory) examines the ethics of writing trauma fiction with a new level of self-critique. Again the Gothic helps set the pattern for Briony's experience of trauma: her anxieties surrounding the absence of her father and her entrapment within the ruined family unit due to war follow a conspicuously Freudian (and Gothic) pattern of repression and return. But more than in either *London Fields* or *The Gates of Ivory*, the presence of the Gothic within *Atonement* also turns the mirror on the novel itself as a work of trauma fiction, and on the role of embellishment in reproducing traumatic memory for oneself and for audiences, in a way that troubles the novel's overall claims to being both a vehicle of cultural memory and an act of reparation. The revelation that *Atonement* is Briony's own fabrication undermines her claim to have atoned for past sins through her writing, revealing her motivations to be potentially more self-serving than sympathetic to the victims and highlighting the moral dubiousness behind authorial use of another's trauma (especially when a quasi-authorial act like Briony's has inflicted trauma of its own).

From here the Gothic's role in interrogating the ethics of writing trauma eclipses its role in articulating characters' otherwise unspeakable anxieties, or at least invests this articulation with a degree of cynicism. While *Regeneration* uses the Gothic tropes of haunting, the return of the repressed, and menacing, antagonistic landscapes as a means of establishing the mind traumatized by World War I as a destabilized site of powerlessness (particularly in the case of the witness who is vicariously traumatized by encountering the testimony of victims), Barker's Gothic idiom evolves in

the case of *Double Vision*, in which Gothic tropes reflect the impact of both historical and contemporary violence on England as "home" and provide the imagery for Stephen's PTSD, but not without calling attention to the "troping" (Hartman 1995, p. 538) of trauma as a potentially dangerous and exploitative act tied up in voyeuristic desire and fetishization of (specifically female) victimhood. Major doubt is cast on Stephen's empathy for Justine and on the supposedly healing effects of their relationship: a narrative outcome that challenges Caruth's notion that trauma "is never simply one's own" (1996, p. 24) and that to become "implicated in each other's traumas" (p. 24)—that is, to relate trauma "to the very identity of the self and to one's relation to another" (p. 92)—is the inevitable result of testimony.

Never Let Me Go, as the most recent of the six novels in this study, goes the furthest in troubling the trauma fiction paradigm by harnessing the voyeuristic urges of the Gothic in order to reclaim the voice of victims. That opportunities for empathy are again thwarted—the failure of Hailsham's art programme as an experiment intended to stir outsider empathy through the act of representation as well as Kathy's failure to obtain a donation deferral from her former headmistress—is due to society's view of the clones as uncanny doppelgängers of the normal human population. However, this failure is a productive intervention into trauma theory's ethical claims: as the characters with whom readers sympathize, the clones force readers to share in their experience of their own strangeness, while simultaneously recognizing readers' complicity with the society that marginalizes and exploits them. *Never Let Me Go* is the only novel in this study, of which we can say that trauma is truly shared by victims through the act of testimony. Nonetheless, the fact that the healing this act brings about occurs *only* to the exclusion of readers is crucial. In this way, *Never Let Me Go* resists Caruth's formulation of trauma as inevitably and perpetually transmissible, instead suggesting the possibility of resilience and healing. The sharing of testimony does not merely "han[d] over the seeing it does not and cannot contain to another" (Caruth 1996, p. 11), forever reproducing the Freudian unlocalizability of traumatic memory, but instead acts as "a significant carrier of cultural and family identity" (Denham 2008, p. 392), modelling what Denham terms "strategies of resilience" (p. 391) that resist obscuring the experience of historical traumas with Freudian pathology. Kathy's strategic identification as uncanny double produces a sense of reader culpability (and thus alienation) that is necessary to the reclamation of the

clones' agency and voice. Readers are invited to listen to the experience of a trauma, but not to share in it, and are thus denied any sense of self-satisfaction that the act of reading as theorized by Caruth may provide.

In each novel we can trace a progression of greater and greater involvement of the Gothic in enacting this process of self-critique, which is symptomatic of a similar trend within trauma theory, spearheaded by a number of critics who have sought to expand the field beyond its reliance on Freudian psychology as well as beyond what is seen as its largely white, Eurocentric roots.[1] These interventions are deeply necessary, given the resurgence (also a millennial phenomenon) of social justice movements and a related, renewed interest in the identity politics that influence who can speak for, and on behalf of, whom. To what extent are the anxieties of witnessing trauma at a distance a product of an author's race, ethnicity, and/or class? We can see this issue at play in *The Gates of Ivory* through Liz Headleand's anxiety of responsibility for the atrocities she views (atrocities in which she is implicated by her position as British and Western subject). To what extent expectations of audience identity impact on the way in which trauma is represented in fiction is likely to be of increasing interest to the field of trauma theory as it moves beyond its Freudian and Eurocentric origins. Fittingly, this development in trauma theory again finds its corresponding trend in Gothic criticism, this time in a focus on the "global Gothic" (Botting 2012, p. 369) as a study of the genre's proliferation across various world literatures and cultural contexts, including postcolonial literatures. In fiction written with these diverse contexts in mind, the Gothic is poised to open up an even broader range of narrative possibilities and ethical questions that will be of great interest to literary scholars interested in the correspondences and tensions that arise when these two provocative modes of writing meet.

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[1] Cf. Peter Vermeulen, "The Biopolitics of Trauma" (2014); Ananya Jahanara Kabir, "Affect, Body, Place: Trauma Theory in the World" (2014); Stef Craps, "Beyond Eurocentrism: Trauma Theory in the Global Age" and *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (2013, 2014); Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the age of Decolonization* (2009); Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (2013); Sam Durrant, *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning* (2004); Jill Bennet and Rosanne Kennedy (eds.), *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time* (2003); and Dolores Herrero and Sonia Baelo-Allué (eds.), *The Splintered Glass: Facets of Trauma in the Post-Colony and Beyond* (2011).

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.